

# North Mecklenburg Towns Transit Station Area Joint Development

## Principles and Policy Guidelines

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# Introduction

The Charlotte region is at the beginning of a process to invest in the establishment of an extensive rapid transit system. One of the keys to the long-term success of this investment is creating station areas that are major activity centers made up of a wide range of land uses. To help foster the proper growth of station areas, the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC), and the towns of Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, and Matthews adopted Transit Station Area Joint Development Principles in 2002.

Adoption of the Principles provided a framework for local governments and the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) to encourage and promote transit supportive development at public transit stations while not have a deleterious impact on adjacent neighborhoods. However, it is necessary for communities to move beyond the level of simply encouraging and promoting transit supportive development. In order for local governments to realize the goal of creating mixed and multi-use transit stations, they must be provided with the tools to do so. For that reason, joint development policy guidelines have been created that will give the adopting communities the means to foster the type of station development that will help ensure the success of the rapid transit investment. The following pages provide the details on the tools recommended for adoption, and the steps necessary for their successful application.

## ***JOINT DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES***

To provide a framework to be used by local governments to encourage and promote transit supportive development at transit stations

## ***JOINT DEVELOPMENT POLICY GUIDELINES***

Tools to implement Principles and station area plans

# Public Facilities

## PRINCIPLE OBJECTIVE

Encourage complementary public facilities (such as schools, parks/open space, libraries and social service organizations) at or near transit stations to serve both transit users and surrounding neighborhoods.

## POLICY OBJECTIVES

- A. Public Parks/Plazas:** Identify desired sites for small public parks/plazas (up to 4 acres) through the station area planning process. Work with town parks and recreation departments and/or Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation to incorporate these facilities into parks master plans, acquire land, and improve the parks/plazas. For station area park/plaza acquisition, reserve money from land banking funds for early acquisition of parks/plaza sites.



Urban park

- B. Libraries:** Locate new full service libraries with station areas when the station area is located within the proposed library's service area, as indicated on the Library Master Plan. These libraries



Books By Rail window, Portland, OR

should be located within a transit-oriented, multi-use or mixed-use development or in a joint-use development with other public entities. Work with the Library Board to develop a concept for small, outlet library facilities at the station and test this concept at a limited number of stations.

- C. Recreation and Cultural Centers:** Locate recreation and cultural centers within a station area when the station area is located within the proposed center's service area, as indicated by the master plans of the towns' and/or county's parks and recreation departments.

**D. Schools:**

- Existing Schools: Consider the locations of existing schools when locating transit stations, and provide an effective transportation link to schools that are near but not within walking distance of a transit station. Additionally, the station area may serve as an attractor for some of the special programs (countywide magnet programs, pre-kindergarten programs and before/after school programs, etc.) within the district and

*Public Facilities cont'd*

could support families who live in close proximity to station areas.

- **New Schools:** Consider transit corridors and station locations as one of the criteria in the site selection process as indicated by the Long Range Schools Facilities Master Plan. Specifically, work with the Board of Education to consider:
  - New school prototypes that support both the district's curriculum-based facility standards and Transit Station Area Principles; and
  - New or significantly renovated schools that may facilitate programs such as pre-kindergarten or before/after school care which might encourage residential development in transit corridors.



University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Also, consider joint use opportunities with schools when a library or park is proposed near a transit station.

- E. Colleges and Universities:** Work with Central Piedmont Community College and other local colleges and universities to locate facilities within rapid transit station areas.
- F. Government Service Centers:** Encourage joint use development in station areas through the development of strategically located government service centers (Police, Dept. of Social Services, libraries, post offices, etc.). These service centers should be consistent with station area plans and transit supportive development principles. They may be "stand alone" or located within a larger multi-use or mixed-use development.
- G. Medical Facilities:** Encourage medical facilities, especially urgent care facilities, to locate within transit station areas.
- H. CATS Surplus Transit Property:** Make public facilities, as part of a larger multi-use or mixed-use project, a high priority for surplus transit property.
- I. Joint Land Acquisition:** Explore the potential for joint land acquisition.
- J. Public Facilities Standards:** Work with public facilities providers to develop new public facilities standards that are consistent with sound urban design principles in the context of transit stations.
- K. Public Facilities Financing:** Public agencies responsible for financing of public facilities shall provide financing sufficient for the development, maintenance and operation of such facilities over their expected life cycles.



Transportation Center, Charlotte, NC

# Public & Private Infrastructure

## PRINCIPLE OBJECTIVE

Provide the basic public infrastructure within available jurisdiction resources in station areas (such as water and sewer, streets and roads, and sidewalk facilities) needed to serve transit supportive development. At selected stations or in selected portions of the station areas, prioritize and provide for additional infrastructure improvements to serve as a catalyst for new transit supportive development.

## POLICY OBJECTIVES

- A. Station Area Infrastructure:** Develop and implement a capital investment plan and urban design standards for each station area that:
- Is consistent with the station area plan;
  - Is multi-departmental;
  - Focuses on providing adequate underground infrastructure (water and sewer, stormwater) for station area plan development;
  - Provides sidewalks, intersection improvements, local street improvements (including new streets), streetscape improvements, pedestrian lighting and bicycle facilities between stations and existing residential or other transit supportive developments, and meets other high priority station area plan objectives;
  - Makes the station area attractive to promote transit usage and transit-oriented development and redevelopment;
  - Includes an infrastructure funding mechanism that will be used to upgrade existing infrastructure or install new infrastructure in conjunction with private sector development; and
  - Requires the development of regional storm water flood control and water quality improvement facilities that will encourage multi-objective facilities, integrated into other



Sidewalk next to South Corridor Trolley/LRT line, Charlotte, NC



Utility crew, Charlotte, NC

## *Public Infrastructure cont'd*

land uses such as parks, open space, etc. and allow detention to be placed in the most beneficial location, which may be either inside or outside the transit station area core.

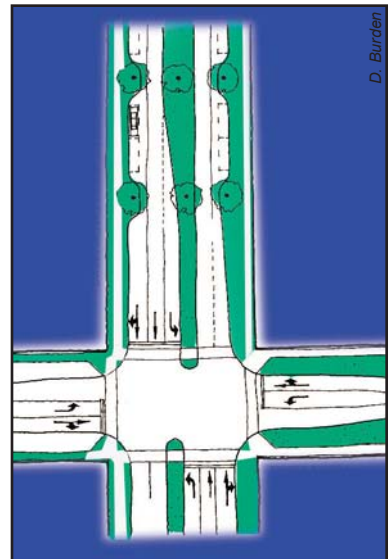
Improvements should be scheduled to maximize the amount of infrastructure installed prior to initiation of transit operations. This will ensure that the improvements are installed cost effectively and in a manner that will not adversely impact future upgrades.

**B. Private & Public Utilities:** Develop partnerships with utility providers (such as BellSouth, Electricities, and Adelphia Cable) to explore locating utilities underground within transit station areas. Participate in multi-jurisdictional exploration of changes to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities policies.

### **D. Modal Integration:**

- **State-Maintained Streets:** Develop an agreement between municipalities and NCDOT about the types of infrastructure improvement desired for state controlled roads. In particular, stress the importance of pedestrian and bicycle circulation within station areas.
- **Design Standards:** Implement street design standards that reflect transit supportive development principles.
- **New Streets:** Consider development of programs that would fund construction of new street segments shown in adopted Station Area Plans in conjunction with station area development and/or redevelopment.

**E. Public Infrastructure Financing:** Public agencies responsible for financing of public infrastructure shall provide financing sufficient for the development, maintenance and operation of such infrastructure over their expected life cycles.



Conceptual drawing of a road redesign

# Housing

## PRINCIPLE OBJECTIVE

Support the development of a variety of housing, which is affordable to a broad cross-section of the workforce and community, and provides a variety of housing choices near transit stations.

## POLICY OBJECTIVES

**A. Development of Affordable Housing:** The Town shall aggressively pursue opportunities to develop affordable housing within transit stations areas when participating in joint development projects such as building or providing loans for infrastructure, acquiring land, and/or other economic development initiatives. A transit station area is generally defined as the area within a 1/2-mile walking distance of an identified rapid transit station.



Cornelius, NC

**B. Assisted Multi-Family Housing within Mixed-Income Developments:** Assisted multi-family rental housing is a development receiving assistance from local, state or federal government and serving households earning 60 percent or less than the area median income. The Town should pursue efforts for the following:

- Development of assisted multi-family housing within 1/4-mile of a transit station when part of a mixed income housing development.
- The Town shall encourage the development of a minimum of five percent up to a maximum of 25 percent of any development with multi-family units to be assisted units. At least 30 percent of these assisted multi-family housing units shall be reserved for households earning 30 percent or less than the area median income.
- The number of assisted multi-family housing units shall not be greater than 20 percent of the total housing units within a



Memphis, TN



Pittsburgh, PA



*Housing cont'd*

1/4-mile of the transit station.

- Assisted multi-family housing in transit station areas shall be developed as part of a larger mixed income development.
- The assisted multi-family housing units shall be similar in appearance to the portion of the project that is developed as market rate housing.
- The assisted multi-family housing units shall be scattered throughout the development and not concentrated in one area.

**C. Evaluation and Assessment:** The Town shall evaluate and assess the progress of the affordable housing policy within 12-24 months after the first rapid transit line opens to determine if additional changes or modifications are needed.

**D. Transit Supportive Mortgage Strategy:** Work with banks to implement Location Efficient Mortgages (LEM) for home or condominium buyers near transit stops. LEMs increase the buyer's borrowing capacity by recognizing the savings achieved by utilizing transit.

# Joint Public/Private Development

## PRINCIPLE OBJECTIVE

Develop public/private partnerships aimed at promoting transit-oriented development, zoning, and land use in transit station areas to enhance transit system ridership and provide services for those living and working around transit stations.

## POLICY OBJECTIVES:

**A. Public Land Acquisition:** Limited funds should be utilized for selective acquisition of strategically located land around transit stations. Acquisition should be focused on properties that are within ½-mile walking distance of the station, that have a willing seller, and that have development issues that cannot be resolved by the private sector without some public participation. Funding should be concentrated on the purchase of properties that:

- have existing uses that are detrimental to promoting transit supportive development in the station area
- require brownfield clean-up
- have a high property value: structure value ratio (e.g.; land more valuable than building)
- are part of a larger land assembly
- have the potential for public open space or the preservation of historic and cultural resources.
- have the potential for recreational or cultural centers.



*Mockingbird Station, DART, Dallas, TX*

Properties should be assembled to ensure that they can be easily developed for transit supportive development.

**B. CATS Property Disposition:** Once surplus property, purchased with transit funds, has been identified, work to sell/lease excess property in station areas for transit supportive development consistent with station area plans. As the transit supportive development market matures, pursue opportunities to sell CATS surface parking facilities to private

*Joint Public/Private Development cont'd*

sector developers for multi- or mixed-use development that provides the parking provided by the surface lot in a parking deck that is a component of the larger mixed-use development.

- C. Condemnation:** Continue study process for state legislation for condemnation for economic development of properties located within transit station areas and identified in adopted station area plans as appropriate for transit supportive development. This authority will be used as a last resort.
- D. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Joint Development Programs:** As funding becomes available, pursue FTA funds for joint development projects.
- E. Structured Parking Financing:** Study ways for the public sector to assist in financing construction of public parking decks, in lieu of surface parking, within station areas.

# Private Sector Development Incentives

## PRINCIPLE OBJECTIVE

Provide incentives, establish partnerships with the private sector, encourage targeting of incentives to promote significant demonstration projects, and remove barriers to allow for appropriate transit-oriented development in station areas.

## POLICY OBJECTIVES:

- A. Zoning:** Ensure that zoning allows for transit supportive development near transit stations.
- B. Expedited Plan Review and Permitting:** Implement an expedited plan review and permitting process for properties identified in adopted station area plans for transit supportive development.
- C. Amended Regulations:** Review and amend existing regulations (transportation, planning, engineering, building, etc.) to facilitate transit supportive development.
- D. Transit Supportive Development Facilitator:** Consider working with adjacent towns to hire a staff person to serve as the facilitator/coordinator for transit supportive development. This person would assist developers with transit supportive permitting and would help facilitate this process. Utilize this person to develop a Pedestrian Enhancement, Brownfields and Infrastructure Grant Programs. This person would also develop a Transit Investment Gap Financing Program.
- E. Expand Authority to Bond Public Improvements:** Pursue state legislation for project development financing, expanded special obligation bond authority, or other equivalent to be utilized for funding of incentive programs for transit supportive development and other services for transit station areas.
- F. Municipal Service Districts:** Consider the use of municipal service districts in transit station areas to provide funding for items such as supplemental sanitation services, security, and marketing of the station area.



*Development around a BRT station, Ottawa, ON, Canada*

# Marketplace Venues

## PRINCIPLE OBJECTIVE

Encourage the location and retention of a healthy mix of private transit supportive businesses in transit stations.

## POLICY OBJECTIVES:

- A. High Traffic Outdoor Retail and Service Opportunities:** Review local ordinance regulations to allow for kiosks and street vendors
- B. Integrated Development Opportunities:** Where feasible, incorporate transit stations into development projects that will provide retail and business services proximate to the station platform.
- C. Small Business Development:** Encourage small business development in station areas especially in conjunction with the sale of public property.



Rendering - Downtown Plan  
Davidson, NC



Rendering - Mixed-Use Development  
Huntersville, NC

## Conclusion

The long-term success of the rapid transit system is closely linked to creating dynamic, multi and mixed-use station areas. The policy guidelines outlined above will help achieve that success, but will require that the level of cooperation and coordination now in place among the various levels of government and the private sector be raised to a new level.