



Downtown San Leandro Transit-Oriented Development Strategy

CITY OF SAN LEANDRO
Community Development Department

FINAL REPORT
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The Downtown San Leandro Transit-Oriented Development Strategy is a document that will lead to a new kind of development in downtown San Leandro. This new development will bring more housing, retail and jobs and will result in more attractive and easy to use streets and sidewalks. With more residents living and working there, downtown San Leandro will be a more vibrant and inviting place, and public transit will be better supported and more able to provide the majority of daily transportation needs.

This Strategy establishes a land use framework, a comprehensive circulation system, design and development guidelines, and a series of implementation actions that will guide new development in downtown San Leandro for the next 20 to 30 years. The Strategy establishes the policies that developers and the City's Planning and Community Development staff will follow for new projects in the downtown area, informing them of required or allowable uses, building heights and various elements of building design. The document also will guide the City in the implementation of various public improvements that will serve as catalysts for or accompany private development.

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

The City of San Leandro anticipates that the vast majority of residential growth in the city will occur within downtown San Leandro. Downtown San Leandro is an ideal location for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). It is served by excellent regional public transit consisting of BART and multiple AC Transit lines, with plans under development to introduce Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to serve the core of downtown and further link it with neighboring East Bay cities. The city's form originated prior to the dominant use of automobiles for transportation, giving its streets and blocks a walkable size and scale. A mix of uses currently exists within the downtown, including residential, retail, office, and civic institutions. The city's General Plan identifies the downtown as a priority area for new mixed-use transit-oriented development that accentuates its role as the shopping district of the city while introducing higher densities and emphasizing a pedestrian-orientation. This Strategy has been prepared to analyze the potential for TOD in the downtown as a means of fulfilling the goals of the General Plan, to indicate the character of TOD that is appropriate to the downtown setting, and

- The primary goals of The Downtown San Leandro Transit-Oriented Development Strategy are to:*
- 1. Increase Transit Ridership, and*
 - 2. Enhance Downtown San Leandro.*

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to make recommendations for policies and practices that are necessary for implementation of downtown TOD.

The Strategy was funded primarily by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) through its Station Area Planning Program. This Program is intended to increase transit ridership, enhance station access for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders, and promote livable, walkable communities. Additional funding was provided by the Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority (ACTIA).

Two guiding goals for The Downtown San Leandro TOD Strategy were identified at the onset of the project. These goals are to:

- **INCREASE TRANSIT RIDERSHIP** TOD depends on high quality transit. In order to maximize the cost-effectiveness of transit services, a consistent base of riders must be maintained and increased.
- **ENHANCE DOWNTOWN SAN LEANDRO** Downtown San Leandro should be recast as a distinct, vibrant, pedestrian-oriented destination with a strong sense of place and civic identity.

THE STUDY AREA

The San Leandro Downtown TOD Strategy study area is located in the northern portion of the city. It encompasses the downtown core, the downtown BART station area, and the Creekside and Best Manor neighborhoods. The

study area contains 4,474 dwelling units and approximately 10,600 residents; another 5,000-6,000 people work there.

The TOD Strategy study area is defined by a half-mile radius circle around the intersection of East 14th and Davis Streets. This particular intersection was chosen because it is the location of AC Transit’s proposed BRT station. The distance of one-half mile was chosen because it is generally accepted by transit

planners as the maximum distance that the average person is generally willing to walk to transit.

The City’s Redevelopment Agency administers two project areas that fall within the study area of the TOD Strategy: the Plaza Redevelopment Project Area and the Joint City of San Leandro/ Alameda County Project Area. Redevelopment areas often benefit development efforts by providing valuable financing options.

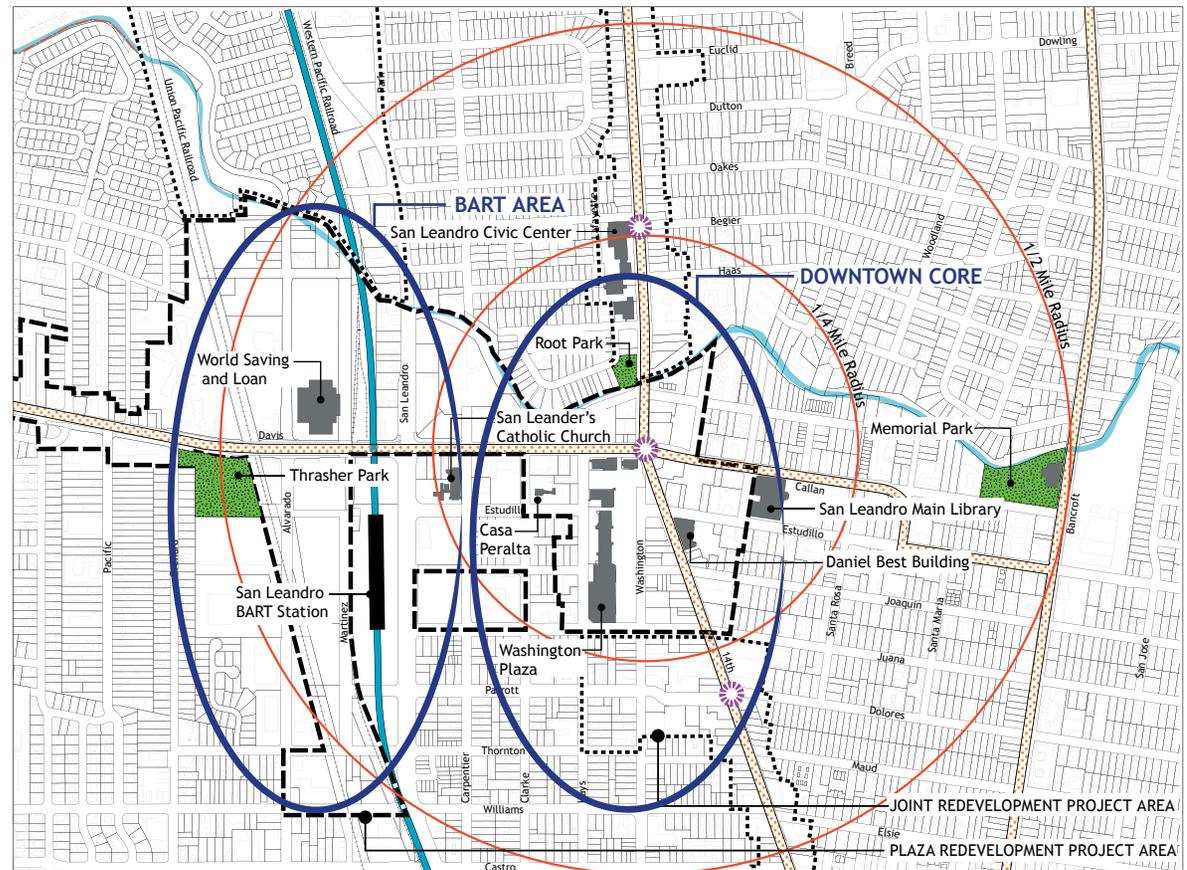


Figure 1: Study Area Overview

A COMMUNITY EFFORT

An in-depth community involvement process helped define the Strategy's goals, conclusions and recommendations. The three primary sources of information for the project included:

- The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), consisting of city staff and expert advisors representing a variety of regional transit and planning agencies. The TAC was responsible for the technical analysis of the planning consultants' work;
- A 27-member Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC represented a diverse and dedicated cross-section of the community, volunteering their time to work closely with the planning consultants throughout the project. The CAC reviewed the analyses and design and made recommendations based on their thorough knowledge of the city and community;
- The community at large, typically involving a variety of elected officials. The community assembled for three workshops with the CAC and TAC to review the on-going project work, voice concerns and desires, and clarify a vision for the future of the downtown.

With this high degree of detailed involvement by the community, this Strategy represents a consensus view of the potential for TOD in San Leandro and truly can be said to have come directly from the community.

During the course of the three community workshops, the following directions were given

to the design team for inclusion in the Strategy:

- **LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT**
 - Residential development should not exceed six stories in most of the downtown, while taller buildings are acceptable between the BART and Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) rights of way;
 - Mixed-use projects should be encouraged. Ground floor retail should be provided as appropriate for the location;
 - Retail development should be locally-owned and operated, reflecting the uses currently used and valued in the downtown. Including national retailers is acceptable, but should not be the focus or primary occupants of retail development;
 - Office development should be done on a small scale, infill basis in the downtown core.
- **OPEN SPACE**
 - A civic plaza or park should be provided in the core of downtown to serve as a gathering space for the community;
 - Neighborhood parks and playgrounds are needed for existing and future residents;
 - A linear "greenway" using railroad or BART right-of-way land is desirable as an exercise and circulation facility;
 - San Leandro Creek should be better used as an element of public open space and be part of the city's park system.



Community meeting to discuss the Strategy, September 2006.



The CAC, consultants and community members touring successful downtowns and TODs in the Bay Area. (Mountain View Civic Center)

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- **PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT**

- o Streetscape improvements are needed to enhance the pedestrian experience on many downtown streets and to encourage walking. East 14th Street's narrow sidewalks are of particular concern as impediments to considering downtown as a pedestrian environment;
- o Streetscape design must account for safety and comfort. Sufficient sidewalk space, adequate lighting, separation from traffic, and activity ("eyes on the street") promote feeling safe and encourage sidewalk use.

- **CIRCULATION**

- o Parking impacts (including the impact on development and the potential for increased traffic associated with greater numbers of vehicles) should be reduced by limiting both parking supply and demand;
- o Public parking facilities should be provided to support retail and to provide development opportunities on surface parking sites;
- o Bicycle facilities should be incorporated in all new development and in streetscape improvements;
- o Hays Street should be closed, if feasible, between Davis and East 14th Streets to facilitate the creation of a creekside park.

What is Transit-Oriented Development?

Transit-Oriented Development is little different from good town planning: it creates a place where people have convenient access to the goods and services they need on a daily basis, provided in an environment that is attractive, usable, accessible and enjoyable. Transit-Oriented Development recognizes that proximity to transit can be vital to achieving this environment, especially in metropolitan areas where opportunities for living and working are abundant and accessible by such transit. TOD comprises the following characteristics:

- A circulation framework (streets, paths and transit ways) accessible to all members of society, that accommodates all modes of transportation - pedestrians, bicycles, transit and motor vehicles - without allowing one mode to dominate the others. The circulation framework enables and encourages walking;
- A mix of land uses, such as housing, office, retail, and civic and cultural institutions that support transit operations by attracting people to the area;
- Sufficient densities to support transit and the retail, entertainment, services, public spaces and other attractions of the area.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission has further defined Transit-Oriented Development as places with a mix of homes, jobs, shops and services in close proximity to frequent, high-quality transit services. Such



TOD includes a mix of uses, such as residential and retail, located near transit.



TOD-supportive residential densities range from townhouses to multi-story buildings.



Oakland's Fruitvale Village was built as a TOD and is intended to revitalize its adjacent neighborhoods.



Hayward Civic Center is a TOD that combines a government job center with a mix of residential densities.

development is often compact in form, rather than sprawling, and provides a range of public amenities that creates an enjoyable and attractive environment for daily life. With the right mix of housing, jobs, shopping, recreation and services, and access to abundant transit options, TOD can create an environment where transit and walking can satisfy almost all transportation needs. The use of, or even the ownership of an automobile, can be an option rather than a necessity. Cars are not prohibited from TOD; they simply are needed less often.

To achieve this auto-optional condition, TOD must be developed in a way that makes walking, bicycling and transit use convenient, safe and efficient. Compact form helps satisfy this condition, while policies that encourage a reduction in the expectation of automobile use must also be included. Zoning codes can reduce the amount of parking required by new development, require bicycle facilities such as secure bicycle parking in buildings, or demand that front doors and windows, rather than parking lots, face public sidewalks. General Plans can be modified to allow higher levels of traffic congestion while placing priority on improvements for pedestrians, such as wider sidewalks or narrower intersections. TOD encompasses both the physical design of places well-served by public transit, and the policies and practices needed to ensure that compact development is not overrun by cars.

TOD is a flexible form of development that adapts to local conditions, including both the

kind of transit being served as well as the existing form and character of the community. Regional transit systems (such as BART) with widely spaced high-speed train stations and high ridership numbers often attract larger or more intense development that provides a greater quantity of potential riders, while smaller systems or those with frequent stops (such as light rail or local bus systems) may influence only a few nearby parcels. Development may include new buildings as well as the continued use or renovation of existing buildings. Where undeveloped sites are available, these often are the ideal focus for TOD projects. In addition, parcels that may be underused, such as surface parking lots, vacant buildings, outdated shopping centers or older industrial sites, are perfect targets for the revitalization and increased value brought about by bringing in attractive new uses. In all cases, regardless of the size or location of the transit system or the conditions of the community, TOD comes about because it recognizes people's need and desire for convenient access to work, home and daily goods and services that can be made available without requiring long commutes or land-intensive urban sprawl.

The Strategy

Before:

The crossroads of San Leandro no longer feels like the heart of the city. Instead of civic-minded buildings and a gracious plaza, there are low-slung buildings that turn their back to the street, a wide sidewalk where San Leandro Plaza used to sit, vacant buildings fronting a mostly empty parking lot, and a large parking lot serving a suburban style shopping center. It can also be a congested intersection at busy times of the day, where pedestrians don't always feel safe crossing the street. Downtown San Leandro has many positive attributes. Unfortunately, these are not shown to advantage in the heart of the city.



East 14th Street and Davis Street - The Crossroads of Downtown San Leandro

After:

Transit-Oriented Development brings a renewed vitality to downtown San Leandro. New stores, restaurants and cafes combine with widened sidewalks and improved streetscape design to return life to the streets. With residences built above the stores, downtown is populated day and night and feels more lively, attractive and safe. Historic San Leandro Plaza is revived and expanded for civic gatherings and festivals, replacing large areas of parking that dominated downtown.

Walking is the preferred means of travel within the downtown.



East 14th Street and Davis Street - The Crossroads of Downtown San Leandro

Land Use

Table 1: Land Use Matrix

Downtown San Leandro TOD Strategy						
Land Use Category	Existing Zoning Districts (Max. Height)	Primary Land Uses Allowed	Maximum Height	Maximum Density	Minimum Density	Notes
			For parcels above 20,000 s.f.			
1 Residential Neighborhood	Follow Current Policy	Follow Current Policy	Follow Current Policy	Follow Current Policy	Follow Current Policy	
2 Public / Institutional	Follow Current Policy	Follow Current Policy	Follow Current Policy	Follow Current Policy	Follow Current Policy	
3 Multi-Use Infill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC (50') • CN (30') • IL (35') • IP (35') • NA-1 (30') • NA-2 (30') • P (30') • RD (30') • RM-1800 (50') • RM-2500 (45') • RS (30') 	Residential, Retail, Office	50'	40 du/ acre (res'l) 1.0 FAR (office)	20 du/ acre	Single-use and mixed-use development allowed. Ground floor retail encouraged on East 14th Street and Washington Avenue. Coordinate requirements of NA1 and NA2 districts as necessary.
4 TOD-Transition Mixed-Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CD (75') • P (30') • RD (30') • RM-1800 (50') 	Residential Required; Retail & Office allowed	50'	60 du/ acre	20 du/ acre	
5 TOD-Residential Mixed-Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC (50') • CD (75') • IP (35') • P (30') • PS (n/a) • RD (30') • RM-1800 (50') • RM-3000 (40') 	Residential Required; Limited Retail & Office allowed	60' or 75' (See Figure 8)	100 du/ acre	60 du/ acre	
6 TOD-BART Area Mixed-Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IP (35') 	Residential Required; Limited Retail & Office allowed	No Limit	No Limit	80 du/ acre	
7 Office Mixed-Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC (50') • IL (35') • IP (35') • P (30') • PS (n/a) • RM-1800 (50') 	Office, Residential, Retail	75'	No Limit	60 du/ acre (res) 1.0 FAR (comm)	Office required fronting Davis Street, encouraged fronting San Leandro Boulevard. Service retail allowed in mixed-use projects.
8 Retail Mixed-Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC (50') • CD (75') • P (30') 	Retail, Residential, Office	75' 24' minimum (East 14th Street)	75 du/ acre (res) 2.0 FAR (office) 1.0 FAR (retail)	35 du/ acre (res) 1.0 FAR (retail, where required)	Ground floor retail required on East 14th Street and Washington Avenue, encouraged elsewhere with possible density bonus. Ground floor office on East 14th Street limited to 15% of block frontage. Coordinate requirements with <i>East 14th Street South Area Development Strategy</i> as necessary.

Figure 6: Land Use Framework

- Legend**
- 1 Residential Neighborhood
 - 2 Public/Institutional
 - 3 Multi-Use Infill
 - 4 TOD-Transition Mixed-Use
 - 5 TOD-Residential Mixed-Use
 - 6 TOD-BART Area Mixed-Use
 - 7 Office Mixed-Use
 - 8 Retail Mixed-Use
 - 9 Open Space
 - East 14th Street Study Areas
 - BART Track / Station
 - AC Transit Proposed BRT Station

