Residential TOD in Four Massachusetts Settings

Building Transit Neighborhoods Through Density, Design, and Diversity

Alden S. Raine, PhD
AECOM TRANSPORTATION
Residential TOD Flourishes When...

- The regional transit network is extensive and interconnected, maximizing the chances that people can both live and work at transit locations.
- A broad coalition of stakeholders “gets it”—the transit authority, state and local governments, regional planning agencies, community groups, environmentalists.
- Communities are prepared to accept density and mixed-income affordability.
- Housing developers are sophisticated, patient, and able to work with community groups.
- Land-owning agencies are disposed to play the joint development game.
- The state is ready and willing to target its complete menu of development programs—especially housing finance programs—to TOD and joint development.
Four Projects in Massachusetts

- All are public-private partnership projects on public land.
- A single developer—Boston’s Trinity Financial—is common to all four.
- No cookie cutters—different community types, different transit technologies, different built environments.
- Each station requires its own adaptation of the TOD principles: density, mixed uses, reduced parking, and a highly-interconnected pedestrian environment.
- All four projects attracted a community consensus for density, diversity, and design.
- All four attracted the full menu of mixed-income housing incentive and financing programs.
In Massachusetts, the Menu is Big

- Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (allocated by the state)
- The Federal HOME program (30-year, 0% financing) and a similar state-funded program specifically for areas near transit
- Construction and permanent mortgage loans by the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency (Mass Housing), the state’s affordable housing bank and bond-issuer

- Gap-filling loans by the Mass Housing Partnership, a companion quasi-public that like Mass Housing supports both rental and ownership development
- A state Affordable Housing Trust Fund and a series of local counterpart funds
- Mass Capital—the state’s integrated series of project-specific infrastructure grant programs, including a specific fund for TOD projects
- Financial participation by state-supported CDC’s and other community-based non-profits
Three TOD Sites in Boston...

1. Ashmont (Dorchester)
2. Maverick (East Boston)
3. North Station (Downtown)
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MBTA Map; overlay by author

LEGEND
Terminal Station
Transit Station
Transfer Station
Conventional Rail Connection
Commuter Rail Station
MBTA Bus Terminals
Water Transportation Services


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...and a Fourth in Lowell

MBTA Map; overlay by author
1. Ashmont Station

- The village square of an old residential neighborhood
- Red Line (heavy rail subway)
- Ashmont-Milton-Mattapan historic trolley, 10 bus routes
- Problem: station a relic of old trolley hub; triangular portion unused, huge "hole" in Dorchester Ave.
- MBTA Station Modernization underway
Ashmont Station: The Carruth

- 116 units: 74 affordable apartments, 42 market-rate condos
- 10,000 sf retail at street level
- Trains, trolleys, and buses at the doorstep
- Only 80 parking spaces, located below ground
- Trinity partnered with Main Streets 501(c)(3) affiliate
- $53 million public-private investment; opened 2008
The Carruth in Its Setting
2. Maverick Station

- Central square of historic waterfront neighborhood
- Blue Line (heavy rail subway)
- 5 local bus lines
- Once and future ferry service
- MBTA Station Modernization underway
Building Livable Communities with Transit

Maverick Landing HOPE VI: Before

- 413 unit public housing project
- Built 1941, one of Boston’s oldest
- Badly deteriorated, high vacancy
- Stigmatized in larger East Boston community

Trinity Financial; Boston Housing Authority
Maverick Landing HOPE VI: After

- A new mixed-income community of 396 units
- 77% affordable rentals for families at or below 60% of median SMSA income
- Trinity partnered with East Boston CDC
- Project includes Carlton Wharf waterfront mid-rise component
- HUD contribution $34 million; total public-private investment of $109 million; completed 2006
- Affordable Housing 2006 Best Design Award
Maverick Landing in Its Setting
3. North Station

- Terminus of north commuter rail system
- Boston Garden built over commuter rail track head and concourse
- Orange Line (heavy rail subway) and Green Line (light rail subway) share a new “superstation”
- Big Dig buried I-93 in front of station, built iconic cable-stay bridge behind
- Big Dig restored historic Bullfinch Triangle street grid and created multiple joint development parcels
- North end of Rose Kennedy Greenway, created by Big Dig on I-93 roof
- MBTA and Turnpike Authority ran consolidated RFP process; City zoned parcels for fast-track approval
North Station: Avenir

- Trinity project: 241 units (224 market rental convertible to condo; 17 affordable)
- 40,000 sf retail at street level, creating street wall along Canal Street
- Only 121 parking spaces, “wrapped” in interior of building
- Built directly over the Orange / Green Superstation, with an incorporated public entrance
- Private investment $150 million; will open 2009
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Avenir in Its Setting
4. Lowell’s Gallagher Terminal

- Commuter rail and RTA intermodal bus terminus on outer edge of downtown
- City and National Park Service exploring streetcar circulator system, connecting Gallagher to Lowell National Historic Park, CBD, hospital, university, community college, minor league ballpark, arena, and redeveloped mill complexes
- Streetcar route would pass through Hamilton Canal District, a major mill reuse project
Building Livable Communities with Transit

Hamiton Canal District

- Trinity Financial designated developer in 2007
- Project will be multi-phase over 10 years; estimated cost $500 million
- Preliminary program, all phases:
  - ~ 625 housing units
  - ~ 424,000 sf office / commercial
  - ~ 55,000 sf street level retail
  - state’s new Lowell Trial Court
- Housing will be a mix of market, affordable, and live-work
- Project provides extensive public open space, including restoration of historic lock and canal sites
- Project will create streetcar alignment thru site
Hamilton Canal District: the Setting

City of Lowell / Trinity Financial
Lessons

- TOD housing projects can be game-changers in their communities.
- Even with everyone on the same page, they are very difficult to do—but the good ones get done.
- The new housing must fit seamlessly with the other uses in the “village”, with the transit, and with the public realm.
- Most projects have common elements, but all are unique.

Alden.Raine@AECOM.com