Transit Oriented Development

Executive Summary

Transit Oriented Development is a proven, fast growing approach in creating human-centered neighborhoods in close proximity to transit connections. Design emphasis is on walkability, and safety, while promoting less congestion and cleaner air.
The purpose of the TOD district zoning is intended to implement Omaha’s comprehensive plan by facilitating infill and redevelopment for those parts of the city which, because of their proximity to pedestrian oriented mass transit infrastructure, are considered of primary importance to create active, pedestrian oriented streetscapes and development that varies in intensity and use.
The introduction of Omaha’s first bus rapid transit route, ORBT, brings the opportunity to facilitate Transit Oriented Development along the route. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is development centered around or located within walking distance of a transit station. TOD includes quality connections, mix of uses, greater density, and pedestrian scale design. Uses should further walkability, transit use, and pedestrian activity and safety. Design should create and / or reinforce a safe and comfortable pedestrian oriented environment. Key components of a pedestrian oriented environment include wide sidewalks, landscaping, buildings and entrances fronting sidewalks, facades of quality durable materials and windows, active ground floor uses, and limited conflict points between pedestrians and automobiles.

The City of Omaha Planning Department has undertaken a TOD Initiative which consists of two major actions:

1. **Amend the City’s Master Plan to support and encourage Transit Oriented Development.**

   As a basis for potential changes to the zoning code or any other components of the TOD initiative, the Planning Department developed two amendments to the Master Plan to include the ORBT service area, which reflect current best practices for transit-oriented development. The first amendment, approved unanimously by the City Council on September 10, 2019, established and defined TOD policy within the land use, urban design and transportation elements and amended the land use map by identifying TOD Nodes along the ORBT corridor.

   The second amendment, building upon the TOD policy approved by City Council, will establish a TOD land use area on the future land use map of the Master Plan, clearly defining where TOD regulations will be implemented. The amendment will be supplemented by Transit Oriented Development Zoning Summary and guide including a TOD Sub-district Land Use Map providing for implementation of specific regulations based upon the following general criteria:
   1. Proximity to the transit stops.
   2. Existing entitled rights (zoning rights).
   3. Existing street type.
   5. Transition of scale from high to low intensity
   6. Preservation of residential neighborhoods.

   In addition to the criteria above, the recommended TOD Sub-District Land Use map was developed through extensive public engagement during the spring of 2019 and further refinement by the TOD stakeholder committee.

2. **Develop and propose Transit Oriented Development (TOD) regulations for the Zoning Ordinance.**

   While examples of TOD zoning vary across the country, typical characteristics include increased residential and employment density, regulation for automobile-oriented uses, urban design to support walkability, and alternatives for minimum parking requirements. Based upon extensive public engagement and through technical analysis, the Planning Department developed and proposed regulations to govern TOD with the general themes laid out within the TOD Zoning Summary and Guide.
How Will it Work?

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Implementation Strategy

Following City Council approval of the proposed master plan amendments and Municipal Code amendments, neighborhoods within the TOD area on the Future Land Use Map will not be proactively rezoned to the newly adopted TOD zoning. However, as development and redevelopment occur within the TOD area of the Future Land Use Map, the developer/owner will be encouraged to proceed through a rezoning process, which includes public hearings at Planning Board and City Council. Thus, property owners will “opt-in” to the newly established TOD zoning. (Development review process overview)

The specific TOD regulations can be found in the following companion documents:

- Proposed Zoning Code Amendment for Transit Oriented Development (TOD),
- Proposed Zoning Code Amendment for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs),
- Proposed Zoning Code Amendment to Establish Minimum Bicycle Parking Requirements in TOD and MU Districts and to Revise Related Provisions,
- Future Land Use Map Amendment (Establishing the TOD Land Use Area), and
- TOD Sub-District Land Use Map Amendment

Linking land use and transportation serves as a catalyst to pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods for people of all ages and incomes, offering more housing and transportation choices. It creates vibrant places where our young families can thrive and our parents can age gracefully.

ORB (Omaha Rapid Bus Transit)

ORB is a new service from Metro Transit that will unite smart technology and streamlined travel for faster, more frequent public transportation that will move more people along the Dodge St corridor, connecting to major destinations from Downtown to Westroads Mall. ORBT will run every 10 minutes during peak hours and offer enhanced stations, spacious vehicles, and other travel upgrades. It is anticipated to launch in Fall 2020. Visit rideorbt.com for updates.

It is envisioned that ORBT will be the first in a series of enhanced transit routes that connect along major corridors in the Omaha Metro Area, serving as the backbone of a more reliable and rapid transit system. Initiatives like MAPA’s Heartland 2050 and the Omaha Chamber led ConnectGO Initiative are working with partners and stakeholders, including the City of Omaha, to develop a strategy for these future transit investments.

Other cities have seen an increase in development along transit routes like ORBT. The City of Omaha’s TOD Initiative is intended to foster high quality, context-sensitive transit oriented development along ORBT and other enhanced, high-frequency transit routes in the City of Omaha.