

LA PLATA COUNTY TRANSIT/LAND USE PLAN

BEST PRACTICES FOR LIVABLE, SUSTAINABLE MULTI-MODAL NODES AND CORRIDORS

Tasks 1.5 and 1.6 of the project scope of work call for a literature search and review of transit oriented development projects in the western United States in order to identify land use characteristics, strategies and procedures that support transit services, multi-modal communities and compact development. The result of the research is a set of best practices that can be considered by La Plata County in the development of a coordinated transit/land use plan and implementation strategies.

The literature search and resulting best practices go beyond the direct relationship between land use and transportation to include a broader view related to community livability and neighborhood sustainability. A close connection between land use and transit is a very important element of livability and sustainability, and there are other factors that are also important that have been summarized in the set of best practices. The best practices are:

LOCATION

1. Locate development within and near existing communities and water and wastewater infrastructure.
2. Locate development close to transit.
3. Avoid and protect environmental resources including imperiled species and ecological communities, wetlands and floodplains.

PLANNING & DESIGN

4. Encourage a mixture of land uses including jobs and housing in close proximity.
5. Provide compact development at appropriate densities to support transit ridership and reduce sprawl.
6. Provide a diversity of housing types.
7. Create a pedestrian-friendly environment.
8. Design buildings and sites to serve many users and support pedestrian activity.
9. Provide access to public and active spaces.

ACCESSABILITY & PARKING

10. Design local street networks that incorporate high levels of internal connectivity.
11. Use multi-modal street designs.
12. Connect to local and regional destinations.
13. Configure parking so that it does not dominate.

The table below provides a more detailed description of each best practice, related standards and performance criteria, and the primary sources utilized for this research.

Best Practices for Livable, Sustainable, Multi-Modal Corridors & Nodes			
Best Practice Elements	Description	Standards	Sources
LOCATION			
Locate development within and near existing communities and water and wastewater infrastructure.	Encourage new development within and near existing communities in order to reduce multiple environmental impacts caused by sprawl.	Locate development on sites served by water and wastewater infrastructure, or planned water and wastewater service areas where improvements are made as part of development.	LEEDND ^{1, 2, 3} , CD&T ⁴
Locate development close to transit.	Effective transit-oriented development places residential and office space as close to transit as possible. This reduces vehicle trips and supports walking.	The optimal walking distance between a transit stop and place of employment is 500-1000 feet. Walking distance for residential development is 1/4 th mile.	TNTT ⁵ , LEEDND ^{2,3} CD&T
Avoid and protect environmental resources including imperiled species and ecological communities, wetlands and floodplains.	Conserve water quality, natural hydrology and habitat and preserve biodiversity through conservation.	Adhere to local, state and national preservation and conservation standards.	LEEDND ²
PLANNING & DESIGN			
Encourage a mixture of land uses including jobs and housing in close proximity.	In nodes, a mix of land uses creates a stronger pedestrian environment, more activity and a sense of security, and opportunities to substitute walking for driving.	In nodes particularly near transit stops, zoning should allow a mix of residential and commercial uses, both vertically and horizontally.	TTSO ⁶ , CD&T, TNTT, LEEDND
Provide compact development at appropriate densities to support transit ridership and reduce sprawl.	Certain thresholds of development should be considered along transit corridors and in nodes. A gradient of densities should exist within walking radius of a transit stop, with the highest intensity of use located nearest the transit facility.	Within ¼ mile of transit facility: Corridor: 7 residential units/acre average, 5 units/acre minimum Node: 12 units/acre average, 7 units/acre minimum 0.50 FAR minimum in commercial/office areas	TTSO, TNTT, LEEDND ^{2,3} , CD&T
Provide a diversity of housing types.	Include a sufficient variety of housing sizes and types including affordable for rent and for sale housing products.	Adhere to state and federal standards to enable citizens from a wide range of economic levels and age groups to live within the community.	LEEDND
Create a pedestrian-friendly environment.	Walking is the most common way that people reach transit stops. Corridors and nodes should encourage people to walk by providing a pleasant environment for pedestrians, and supporting healthy activities.	Sidewalks should be a development requirement on all public streets. A minimum width of 6 feet in residential areas and 10 feet in commercial areas.	TTSO, TNTT, LEEDND ³ , CD&T
Design buildings and sites to serve many users and support pedestrian activity.	Design and orientation of buildings should cater to transit riders, pedestrians and cyclists as well as those arriving by car.	Buildings should be located close (no more than 10 feet) or adjacent to public streets and should have major entrances oriented to streets. No blank walls should occur along sidewalks. Ground level non-residential spaces facing a public space should have transparent glass on at least 33% of the ground level façade. Parking should be located to the side or rear of buildings.	TTSO, LEEDND ³

Best Practices for Livable, Sustainable, Multi-Modal Corridors & Nodes			
Best Practice Elements	Description	Standards	Sources
Provide access to public and active spaces.	Provide a variety of open spaces close to work and home to encourage walking, physical activity and time spent outdoors.	Adhere to local parks and open space standards.	LEEDND
ACCESSABILITY & PARKING			
Design local street networks that incorporate high levels of internal connectivity.	In nodes, a grid of relatively small blocks with sidewalks on both sides of streets gives pedestrians and motorists many options. Short, direct walkways between buildings make it safe and convenient to walk.	Require developments to provide a network of connected streets to form small blocks (200-400 feet per side). Prohibit cul-de-sacs or dead-end streets except where existing conditions require them. If created, require pedestrian/bicycle connections to adjacent streets. Require short, direct walkways from door to door between adjacent developments and from building entrances to transit stops.	TTSO, TNTT, LEEDND
Use multi-modal street designs.	Conventional street standards designed to accommodate auto travel are not appropriate. Streets should be designed for not only automobiles, but for pedestrians, bicycles and transit.	Street standards, particularly in nodes, should always accommodate pedestrians, and should vary in modal emphasis as appropriate, to provide a balanced transportation system.	TNTT, CD&T
Connect to local and regional destinations.	Provide connections to local and regional multi-use paths and trails that encourage longer walking and bicycle trips and improve accessibility for the greater community.	All proposals for new streets should be reviewed to assure street connections are provided to local and regional paths and trails.	TNTT, LEEDND
Configure parking so that it does not dominate.	Parking must be treated carefully so as not to become an impediment to pedestrians, and because too much parking can help generate unnecessary traffic.	Parking should be oriented away from the pedestrian realm, behind or to the sides of buildings. Off-street parking requirements should not require high levels of parking, especially when opportunities to share parking are available and on-street parking is provided. Consider eliminating minimum parking requirements, or reducing minimum parking standards in nodes close to transit stops.	TNTT, LEEDND, CD&T

¹ *LEED for Neighborhood Development Rating System, Pilot Version*, U.S. Green Building Council and others, 2007.

² This best practice is an absolute requirement for LEED ND certification.

³ This best practice has one of the top five highest potential point totals available for LEED ND certification.

⁴ *Community Design & Transportation: Best Practices for Integrating Transportation & Land Use*, C. Augenstein ed., Valley Transportation Authority, 2005

⁵ *The New Transit Town: Best Practices in Transit-Oriented Development*, Hank Dittmar & Gloria Ohland, Island Press, 2004.

⁶ *Building Livable Communities: The Transit Stop Opportunity*, The Center for Livable Communities, 1997