NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT THAT CONNECTS COMMUNITY RESOURCES TO TRANSIT

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) AND MIXED-USE ZONING ARE TWO INTERRELATED STRATEGIES THAT CAN FACILITATE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING CLOSE TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INFRASTRUCTURE, HEALTHY FOOD RETAIL, AND OTHER HEALTH-PROMOTING SERVICES AND COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS. THESE STRATEGIES CAN ALSO HELP FACILITATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORT SUCH AS WALKING, BIKING, AND USING A WHEELCHAIR.

MAKE THE CASE:

Why Is This A Health Equity Issue?

The issues below highlight the need for TOD and mixed-use zoning strategies that advance health equity:

- **Accessible and Affordable Public Transit Is a Need for Many Underserved Populations:** Public transit may be a necessity for individuals who cannot afford the cost of an automobile and the associated owning, operating, and maintenance expenses. Additionally, individuals with a low-income, older adults, and people with disabilities may also need to rely heavily on public transportation[203,204] for reaching services, employment, and recreation.

- **Negative Consequences of Zoning Strategies May Exist in Underserved Communities:** Over time, zoning and other factors have contributed to the differential distribution of community resources (e.g., healthy food and physical activity opportunities), and ultimately health inequities.[151,205] Zoning strategies such as transit-oriented development may also lead to changes in neighborhood demographics and housing values. Such changes may lead to the displacement of some populations, possibly placing them further away from quality employment opportunities, schools,[203] and health-promoting resources such as healthy food retail and parks.

- **Rural Communities Face Unique Issues Related to Transportation and Access to Goods and Services:** Many residents in rural areas frequently lack or have limited access to public transportation options.[206] Further, long commute times, infrequent service, cost, and lack of infrastructure to facilitate transit use may present additional barriers to reliable transportation for rural public transit users.

Note: As many land use and zoning strategies fall in the purview of other sectors, public health agencies should work with appropriate partners when considering such strategies.

Design and Implement with Health Equity in Mind

To maximize health impact and advance health equity, consider these factors and others when designing, implementing, and evaluating transit-oriented development and mixed-use zoning strategies:

KEY FACTORS	BARRIERS OR UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES	OPPORTUNITIES TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT
INCLUSIVE ANALYSIS Establish an inclusive process designed to assess health effects and define local solutions	Zoning and transit projects may move ahead without a clear understanding of potential outcomes for health and health inequities.	• Use health and equity impact assessments to identify potential unintended negative consequences of all community improvement efforts. • Engage residents in the assessment process and raise awareness of potential health effects of proposed plans and any alternatives. • Use assessment process to increase transparency in decision-making and improve communication between partners.
COMMUNITY AWARENESS & INVOLVEMENT Build capacity and promote engagement of people who are typically absent from planning processes	Underserved residents may be left out of planning processes,[207] which may result in development decisions that fail to encompass diverse perspectives. Planning processes can also be time consuming and technical,[208] which may present a barrier to resident participation.	• Diversify leadership on boards and commissions to ensure multiple perspectives in decision-making processes. • Cultivate resident understanding, leadership, and decision-making through training programs, guided reviews of plans, neighborhood scans, and mapping activities. • Ensure public input is inclusive, timely, and representative of community experiences.
DISPLACEMENT Account for potential displacement effects of TOD and mixed-use zoning strategies	Transit investments may drive up median area income, housing values, and rents. A possible result of such changes is that existing residents and small business owners may no longer be able to afford living or doing business there.	• Conduct an assessment (e.g., health impact assessment) to examine the possibility of displacement with TOD and mixed-use zoning strategies. • Utilize supportive mechanisms and community benefits agreements (e.g., affordable housing protection, local hiring ordinances, tax credits) to ensure current residents are not displaced and can benefit from improvements.[209]
TRANSPORTATION NEEDS Consider TOD and mixed-use zoning strategies in transportation networks that serve all transit users	Many TOD efforts are centered on rail with little focus on bus transit or bus rapid transit. Rail projects can be resource-intensive, may often serve more affluent populations, and could divert funds from bus transit upgrades.[210,211]	• Consider TOD and mixed-use zoning strategies near transit hubs, transit connections, and intersections that are served by multiple bus routes in communities where rail is limited. • Where possible, align development and transit with the places people need to travel (e.g., housing, employment, services).
EXISTING OPPORTUNITIES Expand TOD and mixed-use zoning efforts to address social determinants of health	Transit-oriented development and mixed-use zoning may not explicitly address community conditions like access to healthy food and physical activity opportunities, or other social determinants such as safety, jobs, and housing.	• Use TOD and mixed-use strategies to provide incentives to businesses that could provide healthy food options, and to create environments that support physical activity. • Consider limiting aspects of nuisance businesses (e.g., density, location) which may affect quality of life, increase safety concerns, and be more common in low-income neighborhoods. • Consider ways to create access to living wage employment through compact zoning and development that connects residents to employment opportunities. • Employ techniques such as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design[198] to address safety.

Build the Team: Partnership for Success

Successful efforts to implement transit-oriented development and mixed-use zoning strategies depend on bringing a diverse set of partners to the table early, consistently, and authentically. These partners may include the following:

- Area Agencies on Aging
- Community-based organizations
- Community development corporations
- Community finance institutions
- Community members and residents affected by transit investments (of diverse abilities, ages, cultures, gender, income levels, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation)
- Developers
- Funders
- Local businesses
- Local, state, and regional governments
- Metropolitan planning organizations
- Public health agencies
- Public Works Department
- Regional transit agencies
- Zoning and Planning organizations

HEALTH EQUITY IN ACTION

Addressing Equitable Development through a Health Impact Assessment of a Zoning Code

Baltimore, MD

Many Baltimore neighborhoods have higher rates of homicide and chronic disease than the rest of Maryland.[212] The investigators of the *Zoning for a Healthy Baltimore* Health Impact Assessment (HIA) argued that truly tackling health disparities in Baltimore required addressing factors in the zoning code related to crime and violence, with the goal of enabling walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. They made the case that environmental changes to address safety concerns could increase walking and activity for neighborhood residents.

The Public Health Working Group at Johns Hopkins University and the Baltimore City Health Department conducted a HIA funded by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in order to address the intersection of urban planning and public health by emphasizing that zoning can influence health. The HIA was used to identify which elements of the Baltimore zoning code (in its first rewrite since 1971) might promote or inhibit health—both generally and related to childhood obesity in particular.

The HIA began with a detailed literature review. One of the several findings was that the density of alcohol outlets in an area is linked to increased rates of violence. Several steps were already being taken to improve walkability and food access, however, the HIA helped draw attention to the role alcohol outlets might play in affecting neighborhood health. An evaluation of how the zoning regulations might change, reviews of the scientific literature, and interviews with stakeholders and urban health experts made it clear: addressing the number and location of alcohol outlets in certain neighborhoods could begin to shift perceptions of safety and impact physical activity rates to reduce the wide health disparities in Baltimore.

By using neighborhood health profiles, violent crime statistics, and alcohol outlet location data, the HIA team was able to demonstrate the need for additional consideration of alcohol outlet locations in the city's rewrite of the zoning code. Working with a variety of stakeholders including the departments of Law, Planning, and Health, the HIA team developed recommendations to address the density of alcohol outlets. Since the development of the recommendations, Baltimore City has revised its zoning code to incorporate dispersal standards and other strategies for new and existing alcohol outlets.

Fruitvale Arch Monument at the Fruitvale Transit Village which now connects community residents to housing, services, and other resources. Photo Courtesy of Brandon Moore.

Job Opportunities and Services Come to a Neighborhood via Transit-Oriented Development

Oakland, CA

In the early 1990s, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) announced a plan to build a massive parking garage near the Fruitvale transit station in Oakland. The proposed garage would have increased single-occupant automobile traffic and isolated the Fruitvale neighborhood, a largely immigrant community of households living below the federal poverty level. In response, residents worked closely with The Unity Council, a community development corporation that helps families and individuals build wealth and assets, to develop an alternative plan for the Fruitvale Transit Village. This village was one of the first transit-oriented developments in the United States.

The new transit village development provides housing, services, and jobs to low-income residents in a central location. The Unity Council leveraged funding from several federal, state, local and private sources. The Council also partnered with BART and the City of Oakland to address concerns regarding public safety, walkability, affordable housing, and economic development.

Businesses and organizations in the Fruitvale Transit Village now cater to residents, commuters, and visitors. The Village has a daycare center, clinic, high school, senior center, library, and sit-down restaurants. It also hosts a weekly farmers' market and one of the largest Day of the Dead festivals in the nation. Five hundred jobs are provided onsite and several thousand people receive services in the Village each day.

The Fruitvale Transit Village has become a safe haven, bringing generations—preschoolers, teenagers, and older adults—together and fostering a collective sense of respect for the community space. The Unity Council has begun the next phase of the project: more housing and a large community center that will be open seven days a week, with culturally appropriate youth-focused programming at low or no cost. Careful planning has helped protect against displacement of residents, encouraging a flourishing mixed-income neighborhood through job opportunities, services, and affordable housing.