TRANSIT-ORIENTED NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT GUIDE
Our goal is to create a cycle of reinvestment and equitable growth across the metro, where transportation facilitates development and development facilitates transportation.
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Transit-Oriented Development ("TOD") is term used to describe development patterns supported by our multimodal transportation systems. When put into action, it creates vibrant neighborhoods, supported by many forms of mobility, and improves community access. Many historic streetcar suburbs and urban core neighborhoods in Kansas City can be described as transit-oriented, because they are composed of a distinct activity center where people used to board the streetcar, surrounded by walkable blocks connecting seamlessly into the neighborhoods. Transit-oriented neighborhoods have three distinct features:

- **Compact** – Transit-oriented neighborhoods contain efficient development patterns at various scales of development, enabling a greater number of people to have walkable access to the transit system.

- **Connected** – Transit-oriented neighborhoods provide balanced multimodal (pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and auto) facilities between neighborhoods and transit, promoting access to both local and regional destinations.

- **Diverse** – Transit-oriented neighborhoods support a variety of uses, including a variety of housing types, goods and services, and everyday amenities.
WHY TOD?
Transit-Oriented Development makes neighborhoods more livable by expanding access to daily destinations, including jobs, education, healthcare, and goods and services. TOD can reduce the cost of living, by decreasing the reliance on personal vehicles through the establishment and reinforcement of robust, walkable, and connected places. The outcomes are threefold:

- **Physical** – a variety of uses, enhanced local/regional connectivity, and improved facilities enhance access by foot, bike and transit, improving public health.
- **Economic** – reduced cost of living, efficient, productive development patterns, and incremental development opportunities can help build individual, family, and community wealth.
- **Social** – the variety of uses, including commercial and housing opportunities, creates life-long full-service communities and supports local businesses.
EVOLUTION OF KANSAS CITY

Kansas City was once a transit-oriented city. Between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Kansas City established one of the most extensive streetcar systems in North America, and built transit-oriented neighborhoods around more than 300 miles of streetcar. First introduced in 1870, Kansas City spent 8 decades as a streetcar city, growing from a small village on the Missouri River, into a full-fledged city of more than 400,000 people within 60-square miles by the 1940s.

The era following World War II saw drastic shifts that led to mass suburbanization and urban disinvestment. Introduction of the automobile to the masses, distorted conditions that had created the transit-oriented development pattern of Kansas City within its 1909-46 boundary. This condition was intensified by federal investment in the interstate highway system and federal subsidies for mortgages that allowed people to live further outside the city. The first of a long series of annexations began in 1947, and the last line of the historic streetcar network was shut down by 1957, as buses and automobiles became the primary transportation modes. The suburbanization of Kansas City, and white flight, spread the population far beyond the original 1909 boundary, eventually expanding the service area of the Area Transportation Authority to 4,423 square miles covering the metropolitan area in Kansas and Missouri. This produced new, car-oriented contexts in the Missouri and Kansas suburbs, and led to significant disinvestment in the core.

Understanding Kansas City’s transportation and development history is key for moving towards a transit-oriented city that makes smart, fiscally sustainable, and socially impactful investments.
EVOLUTION OF KANSAS CITY

The present-day development pattern of Kansas City is deeply tied to its transportation history, and impacts the fiscal efficiency of public investments. The value per acre mapping prepared for Kansas City illustrates the efficient use of land and infrastructure for different development patterns exhibited through property value. Today, some of the most efficient areas of our city are where the streetcar networks were built a century ago.

And yet, despite having the same development patterns of the most productive areas, Kansas City’s East Side has seen a sharp decline in value. This shift can be attributed to racially motivated practices that historically suppressed investment and wealth-building opportunities for black and immigrant families, including redlining and blockbusting. The impact of these practices has been intergenerational and has not yet been rectified. Reinvestment in these areas must prioritize wealth-building for existing residents, while equitable development can be employed to repopulate these core neighborhoods.

Sustaining fare-free transit in Kansas City will require building a city that is fiscally robust and intentionally transit-oriented. Development patterns play a foundational role in making this possible. This awareness is critical as we rebuild our city in a more equitable way with greater housing options and affordability. This will require ongoing, public discussions amongst city stakeholders, citizens, and leadership.
Transit-oriented development is an ideal approach to rebuild Kansas City and throughout the region. However, not all areas are well-positioned to support TOD because their existing patterns, uses, and transit service conflict with TOD principles.

TOD-readiness is an assessment of both the current characteristics of different areas in the city, as well as Kansas City’s planning policies and regulations. The assessment identifies those areas where investments in TOD are ripe and should be prioritized. Existing metrics for land use, urban design, and transit service provide context for areas of Kansas City that are currently reflecting TOD environments in their public and private investments. The maps illustrate the extent to which neighborhoods are aligned with principles of transit-oriented places and TOD.

Transit-Readiness Assessment Metrics:
- Urban Design – Intersection Density, Bike Network, Pedestrian Infrastructure
- Land Use – Job Density, Destination Density, Residential Lot Patterns
- Transit Service – Citywide Routes and Frequency Additional detail regarding the assessment metrics can be provided upon request.

The combined metric map (right) illustrates in the darkest blue areas where neighborhood conditions in Kansas City are most aligned with the principles of transit-oriented development. Not surprisingly, the most transit-oriented areas are generally aligned with the original 1909 boundary, that part of the city originally built for transit.
The productivity of development patterns are measured by the return - measured in private development - against the investment in public resources. In other words, a property is productive if it generates more tax revenue than the cost of the public infrastructure that supports it. The productivity of communities is an important measure of fiscal sustainability. The productivity of a place is directly related to its physical development patterns – the more compact, connected and varied the place, the more productive the place. The more dispersed, disconnected, and singular in use the place, the less productive. The maps above illustrate the productivity metrics used to assess the city and identify where productivity exists.

Productivity Assessment Metrics:
- Tax Revenue per acre – revenue generated through sales, resident income, and property on a per acre basis.
- Assessed Value per acre – the current value of properties, measured on a per acre basis to measure efficiency of development patterns.
- Median Home Value – home values averaged per census block group.

Productivity measures illustrate the value of compact, connected, and varied development patterns to the City, as is evident by the values generated within the urban core from State Line Road to Troost Avenue, the Missouri River to 71st Street. What is also evident from the maps is the value that is missing within the remainder of the 1909 Kansas City boundary. This “East Side”, as it often referred to, shares the same development patterns and connectedness, and once shared the same variety of use, as the area west of Troost. However, as mentioned previously, racist policies and practices suppressed investment and opportunities in neighborhoods east of Troost for decades, causing the East Side to lose population. While this has been detrimental to the neighborhoods, this now represents a tremendous opportunity to generate value and create local wealth. The reuse of existing infrastructure, and the development patterns and connectivity that are largely still intact would create a significant return, for the City, on past public investments.
TOD READINESS – PLANNING POLICIES

Investment in the transit system and in transit-oriented development should be targeted to neighborhoods with planning policies that support key principles of transit-oriented development and walkability. The documents that guide development and investment in Kansas City’s neighborhoods are the Area Plans. These Area Plans contain community-created planning policies and strategies intended to guide land use, development, and public investment decisions for the next decade. The plans also provide recommendations that guide the physical development of neighborhoods on topics such as transportation, housing, economic development, and infrastructure.

An assessment of each Area Plan provides context for where community-backed priorities are aligned with principles of transit-oriented development. The following maps illustrate a summary of the analysis of Kansas City’s 18 adopted area plans, where plans were assessed against the transit-readiness policy metrics.

Transit-Readiness Policy Metrics

- **Land Use** – Diversity of Activity, Housing Options, Concentrated Investment
- **Urban Design** – Walkable Street Network, Multimobility, Pedestrian-oriented Development

The five areas of Kansas City, that constitute the majority of the original 1909 city boundary, contain planning policies that are highly aligned with TOD principles – Greater Downtown, Midtown/Plaza, Truman Plaza, Heart of the City, and Country Club/Waldo. While other sub-areas of the city also contain some transit-supportive planning policies, the language of these plans indicates that TOD is not the highest priority.

Kansas City’s adopted Area Plans contribute a broader understanding of where investments in TOD would be most impactful for the city. Adopted planning policies are most aligned with transit-oriented development principles in contexts that had been supported by the original Kansas City streetcar system, and future investment in the transit system and TOD should be prioritized in these areas.
PRIORITIZING THE URBAN CORE

FREQUENT TRANSIT NETWORK +

In the first Quarter of 2022, the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority will implement a redesign of the transit system service across the metropolitan area. The redesign will provide more robust service to those that rely on transit, specifically creating a grid of 15-minute, north-south/east-west, service routes known as the frequent transit network ("FTN"). The FTN incorporates the streetcar, Bus Rapid Transit, and bus service within an area generally defined by the State Line on the west, the Blue River on the east, 71st Street on the south and Independence Avenue on the north; an area that covers most neighborhoods within the historic 1909-46 boundary of Kansas City. The "FTN+" system network identify areas within 1/4-mile and 1/2-mile from the new FTN transit network, as well as notable additional key corridors including 22nd/23rd Street and 63rd Street.

CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

Significant capacity for new growth within 1/2-mile of the FTN+ exists. In this context, there are approximately 10,475 residential lots with a development capacity to support over 42,000 housing units supporting more than 100,000 additional residents and more than 300,000 square feet of retail and services. This can be accomplished through incremental development of single-family, duplex, and small-scale multifamily (4-unit and 6-unit colonnades) to rebuild the pattern and scale of neighborhoods that once supported transit and local daily services.

Reinvesting in the current development capacity of the FTN+ also results in a significant increase in revenue for the City, through taxes. Conservatively, at 60% of Area Median Income, this population growth could result in an estimated $831,000,000 of new buying power in the urban core to help support the economic ecosystem of businesses. A more robust tax base with the potential to generate nearly $30-million in new sales, property, and income tax revenue would also sustain public services, infrastructure, and amenities.

The development capacity currently afforded in the FTN+ provides numerous benefits to the neighborhood and community including but not limited to increased population and activity, increased public revenues, opportunities for affordable housing, repopulation of the school district, and improved provision of goods, services & amenities.
SUPPORTING A VITAL TRANSIT SYSTEM

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Neighborhoods within the original 1909 boundary of Kansas City are the most TOD-ready places in Kansas City. Originally built around the historic streetcar system, these places are well-positioned to reinforce transit-supportive development patterns - compact, connected, and varied in use, and have established community planning policies that are supportive of TOD. Additionally, the opportunities for revitalization, redevelopment and the creation of value are immense. Transit-oriented development provides the opportunity to create positive change to address access, equity, and wealth-building, while mitigating affordability and displacement of residents and businesses. TOD is the path forward to rebuild the urban core in support of a vital transit system.