Increasing Access, Mobility, And Shelter Opportunities For Disadvantaged Populations: Affordable Housing In Transit-Oriented Developments

Explore policy tools to improve accessibility and mobility of disadvantaged population by increasing the supply of affordable housing around transit stations and corridors.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

The Southern California region has a considerable shortage of all types of housing and a severe shortage of housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income housing. The mobility of minority and disadvantaged population is restricted, partly due to a lack of access to affordable housing near public transit.

The accessibility and mobility of disadvantaged population can be increased by promoting affordable housing in Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs); however, TODs frequently face regulatory and non-regulatory barriers. Therefore, this research aims primarily to identify barriers and challenges to affordable housing as part of TODs to achieve regional land use and mobility goals at the local level. Secondarily, it will address concerns of gentrification and displacement that often drive community opposition to infill projects.

In addition, the study will explore partnership opportunities between the public, private, and non-profit sectors, particularly the local community development corporations and housing intermediaries who have created the bulk of affordable housing in Southern California in recent decades. The study also will examine the complexity of institutional responses at the local and regional level and the role of the civil society in achieving desired outcomes.
WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The project scope is conceived as an empirical, multiple-case study research to systematically investigate regulatory and non-regulatory barriers to infill development, especially in low-income and disadvantaged communities that have access to transit, but still have not been able to leverage the transit infrastructure to pursue large-scale infill developments and the promise of reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and of improved air quality.

The study focuses on ten Southern California communities that have adopted new specific plans to facilitate TODs. Among those, three TODs are around stations in Orange County (Anaheim, Fullerton, and Santa Ana) and seven in Los Angeles County (Azusa, Crenshaw, Baldwin Park Vermont-Western, Willowbrook, West Carson, East Los Angeles).

The research team selected these ten specific plans for the research primarily because these TODs are generally located around low-income and disadvantaged communities, and also because infill developments are most likely to succeed in transit rich areas, where public incentives have already been put in place to encourage investments, compared to non-transit rich areas (California Air Resources Board, n.d.).

The researchers will complement the land-use analysis by conducting interviews with developers (for-profit and nonprofit), community groups, and affordable housing intermediaries to better understand barriers and risks to investment and development when pursuing infill development.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

Based on the analysis and findings, the research expects to identify and recommend effective institutional responses at the local level including appropriate land use policy measures to reduce barriers to facilitating affordable housing in TODs with the intent to improve the accessibility and mobility of minority and disadvantaged populations.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

The focal topic of this inquiry is the future development of integrated land use, especially around transit stations and corridors that would create affordable housing and mixed-use developments, while improving the access and mobility of transit dependent population. In other words, the study would explore the application of the 3-D principles – density, design, and diversity – in selected TODs in the Southern California region.

Particularly, the proposal will examine the possibilities of in-fill development within the palimpsest of institutional responses at the local and regional level. The aim is to identify the barriers and challenges to achieve the integrated land use goals at the local level, and specifically the concerns for gentrification and displacement that often drive community opposition at the local level. The aim is to identify replicable infill “best practices” that can offer acceptable alternatives within a certain transect of urban growth where a station might be located. The research findings would help catalyze successful implementation of transit-oriented developments.
WHAT IS THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

The following major activities were accomplished in this quarter:

• Analyzed specific plans through the lens of density, diversity, and design (3-D) for the case study station areas.
• Analyzed housing elements for the case study station areas.
• Reviewed Regional Housing Needs Allocation shortfalls for the case study areas.
• Analyzed interviews with planning agencies: Cities of Anaheim, Azusa, Fullerton, Los Angeles, and Santa Ana; Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, California Office of Planning & Research, and California Housing and Community Development.
• Analyzed interviews with developers: Little Tokyo Service Center, Related Companies, Thomas Safran & Associates, Clifford Beers Housing, The Michaels Organization, and National Community Renaissance.