

PLANNING AND ZONING SERVICES

Blue Line – Bus Rapid Transit
Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation

Statement of Need

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DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

To ensure that transit-oriented development is achieved, key regulatory issues need to be addressed. This document frames key discussion points for potential solutions to be addressed by code modifications. The solution set is organized around the contexts identified in the Blue Line Strategic Plan – TOD Neighborhoods (the 1/4-mile Primary Areas and the 1/2-mile Secondary Areas) and TOD Centers (the Core and Station Areas). Each issue is detailed in relationship to previous discussion within this project, as well as options and strategies for code modifications. The summary includes preliminary observations on how best to address these issues, based on three general options – strategic amendments to the existing regulations, a TOD overlay, or new districts that operate as a parallel code. Many of the topics are geared to “strategic amendments” as a preferred option. This is merely from the perspective that a fully integrated code supporting TOD is most desirable, but the discussion will help determine if that is the most practical and expedient option(s).

The deficiencies or omissions from the current regulations – public space, urban form, mix of uses, and housing diversity, provide a foundation for this document. Specific traits of each topic were identified and discussed, with the Statement of Need responding to those deficient or missing traits. These traits include:

- Public Space
 - Promote connected networks
 - Slow the traffic
 - Build generous sidewalks
 - Create comfort and enclosure with street trees
 - Design active gathering spaces

- Urban Form
 - Integrate a variety of street types
 - Build to the street
 - Design permeable facades
 - Hide/ minimize the parking

- Mix of Uses
 - Build capacity
 - Concentrate investment
 - Make the small easy
 - Create many reasons to be there

- Housing Diversity
 - Mix housing types
 - Design slow neighborhood streets
 - Create a variety of engaging, human-scaled entry features
 - Use understated driveways, garages, or parking



STATEMENT OF NEED

The 2017 adoption of the updated City of Indianapolis Consolidated Zoning / Subdivision Ordinance presented significant improvements to better enable development in the community. However, the updated Ordinance did not provide adequate assurance that investments along Bus Rapid Transit corridors will be oriented to support access to residential, commercial, and cultural destinations for people using transit, walking, biking, or in need of access assistance. In order to support development that leverages the significant public investment in transportation, specific attention to the design details and uses is necessary for both private property and public space. Revisions or improvements to the ordinance will focus on these specific elements of TOD to enable an urban design-approach to community development – public space design (focused on street design) and the simplification and refinement of development standards to address development form, the appropriate mixing of uses including providing a variety of housing choices, to create places for people.

REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN CONTEXT

The regulations necessary to implement transit-oriented development were considered by the context in which they were intended to strengthen or create – the neighborhoods or the centers. The transit-oriented neighborhoods are those areas away from the transit stop and are comprised of the primary and secondary focus areas. The Centers include the station stop and core areas, those closest and including the transit station. Each of the context require different approaches and design elements to achieve transit-oriented development.

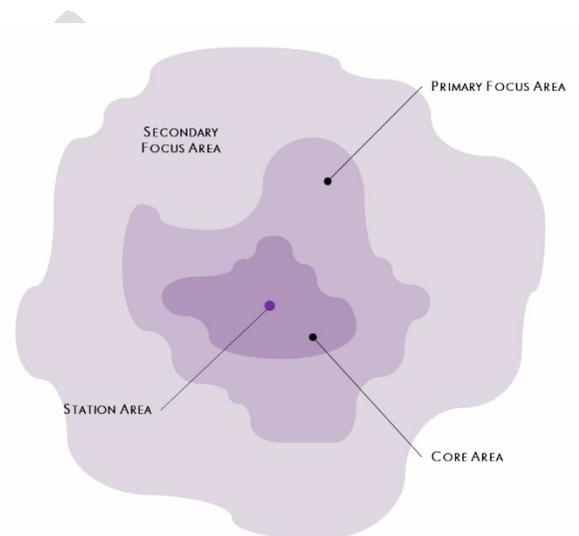
A. TOD Neighborhoods.

Goal: Strengthen the existing patterns of mixed-density, missing-middle housing, and enable new applications based on these neighborhood patterns and housing types.

Policy Guidance: A wide range of small-scale housing types that achieve greater than 12 to 25 du/acre gross, within ½ mile of stations, depending on context and type of station/stop. [Blue Line Strategic Plan, TOD Typologies – page 48.]

Development Code Issues: The following are topics to consider in relation to the Regulatory Conformance Report.

1. Neighborhood Street Design. *[Create comfortable places for people]*
 - Improve sidewalk standards
 - Promote street trees
 - Maximize on-street parking
 - Tailor cross-section and lane widths to context and desired speeds.
 - Revisit connectivity standards, particularly for walkable neighborhoods in the Metro Context.
2. Consolidate lot standards among different zoning districts, particularly D-5, D-5II, and D-8. *[Simplify and refine development standards]*
 - There are currently at least 19 different combinations of required lot widths and areas, and 10 of them appear in the most relevant TOD neighborhood districts (D-5, D-5II and D-8).
 - Some of these different combinations appear to conflict with studied prototypes of the intended housing types.
 - Consider removing distinctions that do not create meaningful differences between districts, or that do not distinguish different building types within a district.
3. Simplify standards for particular building types, clarifying and prioritizing “missing middle” types. *[Simplify and refine development standards]*
 - Duplexes have different standards in each district they are allowed, with very subtle differences; this also results in duplexes having different lot standards for the similar- or same-scaled detached houses in the same district.



TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT NODAL CONTEXT

- Row houses have one standard in all districts (20' wide / 2.4K s.f. lot – or controlled by FAR in D-8); consider two options for this building type – a 20' / 2.4k s.f. lot in some districts; and a 16' / 1.2K lot in other districts.
 - Multi-family buildings have only minimum lot standards, exposing areas to potentially large-scale buildings. Consider better scaling apartment buildings (i.e. small, medium, and large) to applicable districts with a combination of minimum and maximum sizes. (D-8, D-9 and D-10)
4. Refine the lot-specific open space standards. *[Simplify and refine development standards]*
 - Lot open space standards apply in a district-wide manner (i.e. 55%, 60% and 65% in D-8/D5II, D-5 and D-4 respectively). For districts that allow a range of lot sizes and building standards, the district-wide open space requirement get mis-matched with some types.
 - The standards appear high for many compact, walkable housing types. A number of examples of existing “missing middle” types do not meet these standards.
 - Consider tailoring these standards to a lot / building type, rather than the district, and decreasing the standard for specific small-lot building types.
 5. Remove the FAR standards in the D-8 district, and possibly D-9 and D-10 districts. *[Simplify and refine development standards]*
 - FAR is an abstract and formulaic number that operates to undermine urban form, particularly if the appropriate building scale and footprint can be determined by a combination of lot, building type and lot-specific open space standards.
 - The FAR standards appear to undermine most existing and practical examples of missing middle housing.
 - 0.6 FAR for 1-3 story buildings results in building coverage of 60% for 1-story, 30% for 2-story, and 20% for 3-story,
 - 0.8 FAR for 4-5 story buildings results in building coverage of 20% for 4-story and 16% for 5-story.
 - These problems are compounded even further in D-9 and D-10 with the sliding scale for taller buildings.
 6. Revisit the Livability Space Ratio in the D-8 district, and possibly the D-9 and D-10 districts. *[Simplify and refine development standards]*
 - This standard seems to have the goal of improving the urban design amenity and social spaces for certain housing types/districts. However, it is unclear what effect it has on projects since it also is a very abstract calculation, particularly when combined with lot open space and/or the FAR.
 - Determine specific outcomes of this standard in conjunction with other discussion points.
 - Consider if lot-specific open space, frontage types, or other related design standards in this discussion outline equally or better serve the intent of the Livability Space Ratio.
 7. Discuss parking standards and application. *[Minimize the impact of parking]*
 - It is important that parking for multi-unit buildings on small lots remain as minimal and unobtrusive as possible to ensure a compatible building scale and proper neighborhood design.
 - The overall parking requirement is low, and it includes maximums and flexibility for credits – discuss / confirm how this is working.
 - Consider if on-street parking (in association with street design discussion), can count and add more flexibility to this goal.
 8. Improve human-scale neighborhood and building design. *[Ensure human-scaled design]*
 - Potential topics:
 - “Frontage Types” (public realm engagement) – driveways, garages, parking location, building placement and entry features.
 - Basic Building Design – scale and massing, modulation and articulation, transparency, materials.
 - Others? (see general alignment of current Indy Zone Standards, Draft TOD Design Guidelines, 1993 Infill Guidelines, and GE typical approach.)
 - Potential application:
 - All D- districts – standards can be calibrated appropriately to lot sizes and building types/ setbacks, and add value for walkable development patterns everywhere.

- Only specific D- districts, most applicable to TOD neighborhoods (D-5, D-5II, D-8, and possibly D-9 and D-10).
- Only certain locations of all districts (or specific districts) –
 - Map a “design overlay” based on transit investments.
 - Use the existing Compact vs. Metro Context filter;
 - Create a de-facto overlay based on distance from BRT corridors and stations (smaller area); or
 - Create a de-facto overlay based on distance from the frequent grid (larger area)

B. TOD Centers.

Goal: Promote compact, walkable and mixed-use development as the default non-residential development pattern for transit-served areas, particularly corridors and in and around station areas.

Policy Guidance: Implement a range of development patterns addressing the scale, intensity and desired mix of uses within four basic and distinct contexts – Central Business District, District Center, Community Center, and Walkable Neighborhood. [Blue Line Strategic Plan, TOD Typologies – page 48.]

Development Code Issues: The following are topics to consider in relation to the Regulatory Conformance Report.

1. Walkable Center Street Design. *[Create comfortable places for people]*
 - Improve sidewalk standards
 - Promote street trees
 - Maximize on-street parking
 - Tailor cross-section and lane widths to context and desired speeds.
 - Revisit connectivity standards, particularly for walkable centers in the Metro Context.
2. Encourage smaller-scale application of the mixed-use districts. (i.e. block or project specific zoning) *[Simplify and refine development standards]*
 - Generally, the MU districts are too tied to the notion of “complete mixed-use center”, rather than implementing the components of a walkable core, transition areas and supporting neighborhoods (D- districts).
 - The districts with the greatest capacity – MU-3 and MU-4, require large areas and therefore a coordinated development plan. (20 to 50 acres for MU-3 and 8 to 25 acres for MU-4)
 - Allow more incremental application of all MU districts to reflect the evolving nature of vibrant mixed-use places.
 - For smaller-scale, incremental projects (reactive rezoning)
 - For large-scale, master planned redevelopment (suburban retrofit)
 - For other planned application as redevelopment or urban infill (proactive rezoning)
 - Consider re-purposing MU districts to the typologies of TOD in the strategic plan:
 - MU-2 - apply in all centers, but particularly small-scale projects for Walkable Neighborhood
 - MU-3 apply to moderate scale projects or higher intensity, particularly the District Center.
 - MU-4 apply to large-scale projects, redevelopment and particularly the Community Center.
 - MU-1 apply to targeted “critical mass” projects of housing and/or employment, on the edges of these centers and along the TOD corridors.
3. Create development standards for a basic range mixed-use and commercial building types and then refine by the districts in which each is allowed. *[Simplify and refine development standards]*
 - The current standards have minimum lot standards (50’ in MU-1 and 2) but no maximums. The minimum may be too large for the fine-grained patterns that make up walkable places, and without maximums all MU districts are susceptible to large projects inappropriate to some contexts.
 - Range of project types could include
 - Small (appropriate in MU-2, MU-3 and MU-4),
 - Medium (appropriate in MU-3 and MU-4) and
 - Large (appropriate in MU-4)
 - Possibly and Extra-large (appropriate only with discretionary review...)

In relation to the discussion of re-purposing the MU districts, this could also establish default standards for all MU districts, absent detailed development plans):

4. Build on the frontage type approach in the MU-3 and MU-4 districts for building form and urban design. [*Ensure human-scaled building design.*]
 - The MU districts all regulate important urban form (required frontages) and building design standards (transparency and entrances, etc.), but it does so with district-wide standards, therefore they are watered down. They will be too lenient on important streets, and perhaps too strict or irrelevant on others.
 - The MU-3 and MU-4 districts begin to address this with the concept of “frontage types”, but these only affect required building frontage and are difficult to apply absent a development plan.
 - Build on this approach for more meaningful and comprehensive urban form and building design standards, with better distinctions in relation to the improved street design discussion.
 - Consider how to apply improved frontage type standards absent a development plan.
5. Limit further investment in unproductive patterns and uses (car-oriented) [*Ensure human-scaled building design.*]
 - In many contexts, standard C-districts (with basic standards and automobile oriented formats) are still mapped.
 - It is anticipated that treatment of these will be addressed on a case-by-case bases.
 - Consider rezoning to MU districts. Slowly converting these areas over time – through either pro-active or reactive rezoning - is related to the discussion point 2. and 3. On incremental and smaller application of MU- districts.
 - Consider additional use restrictions for automobile formats. Proactive strategies (some of which are already included in the current standards and could be expanded) may include:
 - Limit uses by the scale of use (i.e. 10% / 5K s.f. limit for accessory retail/commercial in MU-1; 8K max in MU-2; 50K cutoff for urban format grocery)
 - Limit the format of uses (i.e. relying on the building form and design standards)
 - Having performance criteria for specific uses in specific contexts (743.III Use-Specific Standards; etc.)
 - Further limiting the application of C-districts or allowing only targeted applications.¹
 - Application of any proactive strategies should follow the following steps:
 - Define the area (overlay).
 - Entire corridor (i.e. 300’ of either side of the blue line)
 - Station area (i.e. 600’ of major stops)
 - Transit impact area (x’ from stop, station or frequent grid)
 - Identify specifically what is prohibited.
 - Certain uses (list?)
 - Certain scale of uses (define / refine?)
 - Certain formats of uses (see MU development standards vs. C-district standards)
 - Other combination or performance criteria.
 - What is the level of limitation?
 - Outright prohibition (adopt different strategies of grandfathering / amortization, than typical non-conforming situations)
 - Conditional / discretionary review with criteria for new applications (CC or PC)
 - Specific standards for the use / format for new applications (i.e design, location criteria/limitations, scale limits, etc.) with Administrative review (PC or Staff)
6. Discuss parking standards and application. [*Minimize the impact of parking.*]
 - It is important that parking for compact, walkable and mixed-use areas remain as minimal and unobtrusive as possible to ensure proper urban design and transit access.
 - The overall parking requirement is low, and it includes maximums and flexibility for credits– discuss / confirm how this is working.

¹ It is possible that small pockets of C- district zoning remain contributors to TOD patterns – either as remnants of older patterns that warrant continued investment, or as a strategy to allow some of the necessary but not purely pedestrian-oriented formats in some locations – (i.e. an anchor grocery store on a secondary street of a Walkable Neighborhood center; or a gas station or mechanics shop on the edges or back streets of centers).

- Consider if on-street parking (in association with street design discussion), can count and add more flexibility to this goal.
7. CBD districts, generally. *[Ensure human-scaled building design.]*
- The CBD districts permit the greatest capacity for transit-supportive development, primarily due to lack of standards (no lot sizes, set back, height, or lot coverage standards)
 - The Sky exposure plane are the only urban form and design standards (with the exception of a few use- or area-specific standard).
 - Consider expanding the frontage type approach – urban form and building design based on street character / quality - in a similar fashion as that discussed for the MU districts.

C. Summary of Solutions.

1. TOD Neighborhoods – Summary of Recommended Solutions

	Strategic Amendments	TOD Overlay	New Districts
1. Neighborhood Street Design	✓	✓	✓
2. – 6. Update / Refine Building standards for Missing Middle Housing Types)	✓	?	X
7. Review Parking Strategies	✓	✓	X
8. Improve Basic Neighborhood Design Standards	✓	✓	?
Other Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space • Coordination w/ HP • Use / Use specific standards (home businesses / ADUs) • Procedures – administrative vs. discretionary flexibility • Planned district approaches 	✓	✓	?

Evaluation Key:

✓ = Appropriate strategy to implement concepts

? = Could implement concepts but may involve unnecessary complications or issues to work through

X = Not recommended; could be ineffective due to complications or number of subsequent steps required to implement.

2. TOD Centers – Summary of Recommended Solutions

	Strategic Amendments	TOD Overlay	New Districts
1. Walkable Centers Street Design	✓	✓	✓
2. Encourage smaller application of mixed-use projects	✓	?	X
3. Building type approach for mixed-use / commercial projects	✓	✓	X
4. Build on frontage types approach for urban form and building design standards	✓	✓	X
5. Limit further investment in unproductive patterns (specific uses, automobile formats or C-districts)	?	✓	X
6. Review Parking Strategies	✓	✓	X
7/ CBD urban form and building design strategies	✓	✓	X
Other Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space • Access and Curb Cuts • Procedures – administrative vs. discretionary flexibility • Planned district approaches 	✓	✓	?

Evaluation Key:

✓ = Appropriate strategy to implement concepts

? = Could implement concepts but may involve unnecessary complications or issues to work through

X = Not recommended; could be ineffective due to complications or number of subsequent steps required to implement.