

## Case-In-Point

### Anderson Station: Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in Calgary



(OLSH, 2014)

#### Contributors:

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**Abstract:** *With an increase of population of 1.3 million people over the next 30 to 60 years, The City of Calgary has been making serious efforts to shape development to accommodate this growth. Through increased investment in Transit infrastructure, integrated with land use planning, the City is attempting to accommodate this growth with a variety of housing types and enhanced livability throughout existing communities as well newly developed ones.*

*The Anderson Area Redevelopment Plan is part of a larger policy initiative in Calgary to support Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in Calgary around its light rail transit (LRT), C-Train stations. The Anderson Station Area Redevelopment Plan is currently in progress of being converted from a 20 acre, 1,750 stall park-and-ride station, to a new residential and commercial mixed use site, along with a 500 stall parkade.*

*This site presents the opportunity to look at best practices in TOD planning, including: Public engagement, Urban Design, Transit-supportive land use planning. Progress in the conversion of the Anderson TOD presents numerous barriers, trade-offs and compromises seen in many TOD cases when trying to engage and consult with the existing neighbourhood and other stakeholders.*

## Background and Context

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is a type of development adjacent to transit stations and generally promotes a minimum level of density and mixed-uses such as residential, retail, and recreation (Dittmar & Ohland, 2004). TOD has been gaining traction in North America for several years as a form of development that can reduce urban sprawl and reliance on the automobile (Cervero, 1998; Dittmar & Ohland, 2003; Vos et al, 2014). While this definition resembles that of the streetcar suburbs of the early 20th century, this recent form of TOD is heavily influenced by the principles of new urbanism and focuses on creating development that is pedestrian friendly, mixed use, and higher density (Dittmar & Ohland, 2004). Currently, there is no universally accepted definition of TOD, and many cities have adopted a variation of the previously mentioned principles. Because of this, TOD can take on many forms depending on the culture and growth patterns of a municipality. These variations span from development in existing urban centres to newer suburban development, levels of density, and frequency. The City of Winnipeg has adopted the following definition of TOD:

*Transit oriented development (TOD) is a walkable, mixed-use form of area development typically focused within a 600m radius of a transit station – a Light Rail Transit (LRT) station or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stop, prior to the arrival of LRT. Higher density development is concentrated near the station to make transit convenient for more people and encourage ridership. This form of development utilizes existing infrastructure, optimizes use of the transit network and creates mobility options for transit riders and the local community. Successful TOD provides a mix of land uses and densities that create a convenient, interesting and vibrant community for local residents and visitors alike (Transit Oriented Development, 2016).*

TOD projects aim to have an element of walkability and connectedness to it. Without these, there is a risk of creating transit-adjacent development (TAD) whereby a transit station functions independently and has no effect on the surrounding development, which leads to no improvements in public transit ridership, or decrease in automotive use (Renne, 2009; Vos, et al., 2014).

As transit lines traverse long distance and go through many development topologies, TOD can take on many forms depending on existing population, density, environment conditions, etc, as such, there is no copy paste formula for a successful TOD, each one can vary greatly, and requires a set of tools within a framework to help maximize the potential from each station area. The City of Calgary has developed a comprehensive set of policies to assist in integrating land use and planning station areas (OLSH 2014, p.16), these approach include:

1. Ensure transit-supportive land uses Ensure transit-supportive land uses
2. Increase density around Transit Stations Increase density around Transit Stations
3. Create pedestrian-oriented design Create pedestrian-oriented design
4. Make each station area a “place” Make each station area a “place”
5. Manage parking, bus, and vehicular traffic Manage parking, bus, and vehicular traffic
6. Plan in context with the local communities

## Facts of the Case

The Anderson Station lands are located in the south-west quadrant of the city in the community of Southwood. The site is surrounded by, an auto dealership to the north. Macleod Trail, a major road, to the east. Anderson Road, and a transit bus/train facility to the south and the LRT line to the west with limited access to low density homes. The 20-Acre lot which is owned by the city to act as a 1750 stall park and ride for Anderson Station, is part of the Red Line LRT.



**EXISTING CONDITIONS - 2015**

Current Condition of Anderson Station (Jaffe, 2014)

Anderson Station was at one time, the last station on the line, and thereby acted as a terminal station for South Calgary and needed to supply an increased amount of stalls (1750). Since that time, further stations have been added South of Anderson, and a new terminal station with park and ride provisions has been added. Therefore, as Anderson is no longer a terminal station, the need to provide 1750 stalls is no longer valid, and the land can be used for a greater means, implementing City of Calgary growth and development targets in terms of intensification in established areas and around LRT stations

The planned redevelopment of the site started in 2007, but was put on hold due to resource constraints. However, it was started again in 2011 by the Office of Land Servicing and Housing (OLSH). Working in parallel to the site development, is the creation of a station area plan, an area which covers the larger area. The City's Land Use Planning and Policy department presented this plan to the Calgary Planning Commission, but was sent back to the administration for revisions, currently no date has been chosen for it to be sent to council (Dec 15, 2016).



**FINAL BUILD OUT - 2031**

Proposed build out of Anderson Station (Jaffe, 2014)

The primary goal for OLSH is to “ensure this City land asset is planned and developed to support the land use and development policy objectives for this strategic activity” (Calgary, 2009) Which, given Anderson’s proximity to transit

facilities, is to create a supportive framework for a mixed use, high density community with a strong sense of place and purpose (OLSH, 2014, p.15). Specifically the goals of Anderson are that it:

1. Maintains Calgary Transit operational needs of this key station and maintenance garage and creates a comfortable inter-modal facility for passengers changing transit modes;
2. Creates a safe, direct and comfortable pedestrian environment and promotes walking as the preferred and most
3. Pilots the “complete streets” concept that supports multi-modal mobility and green infrastructure to help reduce
4. Integrates the existing east-west regional pathway into a safe and direct open space and street network, and allows for the future integration of the Macleod Trail “Urban Boulevard” concept;
5. Minimizes the need for personal vehicle use within the TOD through strategic location of a future park and ride parkade, and by locating on-site parking and loading facilities to be located within buildings thereby minimizing impacts on key pedestrian streets and promoting walking once a driver arrives at the site.

To accomplish this, the plan was developed through a collaborative process with a private consultants, City of Calgary officials, area stakeholders and the general public. Along with technical research and a transportation study, the work plan applied a comprehensive public and stakeholder engagement strategy. This engagement process involved constant contact with internal and external stakeholders. Meetings with internal City departments including representatives: Transit, Parks, Planning, and Transportation took place several times, to discuss specific technical issues and develop a better understanding of the requirements that would lead to the desired outcomes listed above (OLSH, 2015).

### **Advantages to transforming Anderson station into a TOD site**

- The city is the major landowner and has access to large parcels to redevelop making land acquisition and negotiation much easier.
- The area has the opportunity to absorb more commercial/office activity resulting in more jobs in the area. Location provides excellent access to AT and to major arterial roads in Calgary.

- Future development has the potential to reverse the trend of the existing built environment by densifying on land as opposed to spreading it out further.
- Use this project to realize several goals within the MDP and TOD policies particularly on managing growth, transportation, and sustainability by integrating all three.

## **Project Complications**

The site had many constraints that added many layers of complexity to it, the LRT line created a barrier that made it the western boundary to development, the existing neighbourhood prevented even distribution of density as the other side would remain single detached housing. The Calgary Transit maintenance garage also had its entry way going through the site, as a result dozens of buses will have to pass through Anderson to get to their routes and back. In terms of existing land uses, a large regional mall and several other big box stores have not created a huge demand for retail as a destination, retail would mostly be used to service residents and office workers in the new development. Finally the area was next to low density single detached housing, making shadow affects a larger issues which made transitioning from low to denser development a greater challenge to ensure residents would not be opposed.

In addition, the Anderson TOD site was being planned for the 20 acres, while the larger station area was being planned for the surrounding areas, this added complications as the Calgary Planning Commission would find it difficult to approve a development plan without a station area plan in place, therefore the acceptance of the station area represented a huge risk for the success of the TOD site. Public consultation went on for years to ensure that the site would fit in with the existing neighbourhood, a term called sensitive intensification, and overall the site plan had general approval from the community. One other challenge that the site plan faced was the inadequacies from the larger station area plan, which suffered from large deficiencies in facts and vision, as a result the area plan was sent back to the administration for corrections and further consulting. As mentioned, the next motion to be debated was for the Anderson TOD site. However, because of its intense public engagement feedback and sensitivity to the surrounding area, it was passed and allowed to go on to the next steps of development

## **Lessons Learned**

### *Outline Plan and Land Use vs Policy Plan Development and Timelines.*

Ideally, a station area plan, or area redevelopment plan to help guide a specific development in a TOD area should be in place prior to that said development coming forward to approval. Station Area Plans ensure developments within an area are comprehensively planned, and are well integrated within the surrounding area. In some instances, depending on the piece of land and the natural barriers (rail tracks, major road ways etc.) which may exist, creating an outline plan and land use in parallel with the station area plan to ensure consistency could also be an option. TOD planning encompasses many 'smart' planning initiatives. Many of these initiatives are already contained within larger smart growth, TOD or municipal plans. Therefore, as long as the TOD Outline Plan and Land Use can demonstrate that it meets these criteria and reflect good TOD planning principles, such plans should be allowed to move forward and help implement the station area vision, rather than hinder its progression and timelines.

Overall, it is up to the municipality and planning departments to ensure Station Area Plans are in place, and specific development areas such as Major Activity Centres in the Case of Anderson Station have policy plans in place. Policy plans help to encourage and incentivize development, and they should be used as a catalyst, not as a barrier for intensification, smart growth and TOD. Cities such as Winnipeg must immediately identify their TOD priority stations, and create plans in a timely manner to incentivize TOD and implement intensity goals.

### *Lessons learned for Winnipeg*

What can Winnipeg learn from this case? The obvious, is realizing the importance of pre-planning station areas. Winnipeg has recently completed the first leg of its rapid transit station, and is in the process of starting construction on phase two. If Winnipeg wants to realize development occurring around its station areas, it needs to start creating more comprehensive station area plans. While it excelled on some stations, like the Fort Rouge site. It is still working to catch up on other sites, and work is still being done on the Corydon Area Plan to help direct future development. Winnipeg is fortunate to still be in a position to integrate development around its stations, however that might be lost without a more aggressive attitude to ensuring station areas are completed in an appropriate fashion.

### **Conclusion**

The Anderson Station case study offers an understanding into some of the common planning issues that happen when implementing a TOD site plan or a station area plan. While unusual for a site plan to be approved before the station area, this plan ran in parallel, matching the important elements of what the station area was trying to direct. Intensive public engagement and meeting with government

departments ensured that the site had appropriate design standards based on its relation to the surrounding area. More broadly, Anderson station represents larger efforts by the City of Calgary to re-examine its land use policy on existing transit investment to align development with the Municipal Development Plan and create new communities and opportunities for residents and visitors.

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