



## **DMMC White Paper**

### **Transit Oriented Development Workshop - Summary**

*A DMMC White Paper is a guide that informs mayors and managers (and likely a broader audience) about a complex, priority issue. Like a DMMC In Depth, it is meant to help members understand an issue, solve a problem or make a decision.*

### **Introduction**

DuPage County has long thrived as a community of suburban municipalities within the immense Chicago Metropolitan Area. Located within commuting range of Chicago's Loop business district and served by three commuter rail lines, the County has experienced a consistently healthy rate of population growth over the years. However, near the beginning of the 21st century, that rate of growth slowed significantly as available land for development neared depletion and municipalities matured. Sparking further growth and development in the County requires solutions that provide for greater density of population and businesses.

One solution is to implement policies that promote transit oriented development (TOD). TOD aims to maximize residential and business development around mass transit options. It is fairly common in urban areas and is gaining popularity in suburban areas as well, particularly maturing ones like those in DuPage County.

DMMC held a workshop on April 10, 2017 in an effort to better educate DuPage County municipal leaders on the benefits of TOD. Presentations were given by a variety of different regional entities that support TOD implementation including the Metropolitan Planning Council, a local developer/architecture firm, Metra, and an advocacy organization for ride-sharing services. Attendees of the workshop also had the privilege of learning how TOD has been successfully implemented by one of their peers - the City of Elmhurst. Below is a summary of the presentations given at the workshop.

### **What is TOD?**

For some, TOD may be a new or unfamiliar topic. Lynnette McRae and Kendra Freeman, Managers at the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) - an organization that has conducted significant research into TOD implementation - provided an overview of what TOD is and helped unpack its various components. As stated by MPC, TOD is "a planning and design trend that seeks to create compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented communities, typically within ½ mile of quality public transportation." It can incorporate a variety of land uses, including housing, office, retail, restaurants, and entertainment. Ideally, it accounts for people and businesses of a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds.



Figure 1 - Main Street Triangle District - Orland Park, IL  
Source: *Chicago Construction News*

Although TOD in the Chicago region is most prevalent in the City of Chicago, it can increasingly be found in the suburbs as well. For example, the Village of Orland Park, a suburb in the southwestern part of the Chicago region, is in the process of completing a 32-acre development called the Main Street Triangle District (Figure 1) adjacent to one of its Metra stations. This development includes a mixture of different uses (known as mixed-use development) in a pedestrian friendly format. The development includes a six-story commercial/residential building called Ninety 7

Fifty on the Park that is comprised of 4,000 square feet of commercial space on the ground floor and 295 residences surrounding or above. The essence of the development, as it is for all TOD, is the ability to walk to local shopping contained within or adjacent to the development for most basic needs and to use transit to commute to work or to access needs that cannot be found locally.

A number of factors are driving the TOD trend forward. Perhaps the biggest factor is convenience - having most basic needs within walking distance is becoming a high priority for many in the Millennial generation as well as empty nesters, both of whom are currently driving the local housing market. Another major factor is lengthy and costly commutes. Given a choice, many prefer to get a head start on the work day or read a book while commuting to work rather than drive their own vehicles and pay to park. A third factor is increasing health and/or environmental consciousness. Exchanging trips in single occupancy vehicles for more environmentally friendly walking, biking, or mass transit is helping many reduce their carbon footprints.

Equity is an important component of TOD. While TOD allows some to live without needing a car, it also increases opportunity for those who cannot necessarily afford a car. The increase in density can also preserve affordable housing opportunities and prevent displacement in established neighborhoods with high demand for new housing.

For those interested in exploring the possibilities of developing TOD, Ms. McRae and Ms. Freeman discussed a service offered by MPC called the Corridor Development Initiative (CDI). The CDI process involves three meetings where current land use policies and demographics are examined, community members explore economic and design options, and real estate experts and/or developers are engaged to provide their perspective. The process concludes with a report containing recommendations.

Further information on MPC's research into TOD and their CDI process can be obtained [here](#).

## TOD Implementation in Elmhurst

While TOD has been a popular trend in the City of Chicago, it has been slower to catch on in the suburbs, largely due to the suburbs' auto-oriented infrastructure. However, the City of Elmhurst is one DuPage community that has successfully developed a thriving downtown that utilizes TOD principles. Elmhurst Planning & Zoning Administrator Nathaniel "Than" Werner gave an overview of TOD in Elmhurst and the Downtown Plan that is helping it thrive.

The successful implementation of TOD in downtown Elmhurst was put in motion by several events. First was the establishment of a downtown TIF district in 1986. At the time, the City's traditional downtown, established before the prevalence of the car, had declined significantly as it struggled to compete with auto-oriented retail options. The TIF district was put into place in an effort to reverse this downward trend. Its utilization can be attributed to many successes, including the renovation of the popular York Theatre and many business facade improvements. Second, in 1990, the City passed its first city-wide comprehensive plan. The plan included a subsection for downtown which led to a comprehensive rewrite of the zoning ordinance to better agree with demand for greater density, increased building heights, and decreased parking requirements. Third, in 2006, the City adopted a stand-alone downtown plan (called simply Downtown Plan) that was updated in 2014 and approved in 2016 with changes further promoting TOD in the downtown area.

The Downtown Plan calls for Elmhurst's downtown area to be broken down into four Functional Land Use Zones: Core, Outer Core, Neighborhood Transition, and Civic Institutional. A map of these zones can be found in Figure 2. Each zone includes a list of preferred land uses that are compatible with the desired function of the zone, as well as a list of discouraged uses. Recommended allowable building heights, and building setbacks for each zone are also included.

Parking requirements also vary, but are based on the distance from the intersection of York and First Streets rather than by Functional Land Use Zone. There are three tiers for parking requirements. Tier 1, roughly 1/8 mile from the intersection, requires only 0.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit. Tier 2, roughly 1/4 mile from the intersection, requires 1 parking space

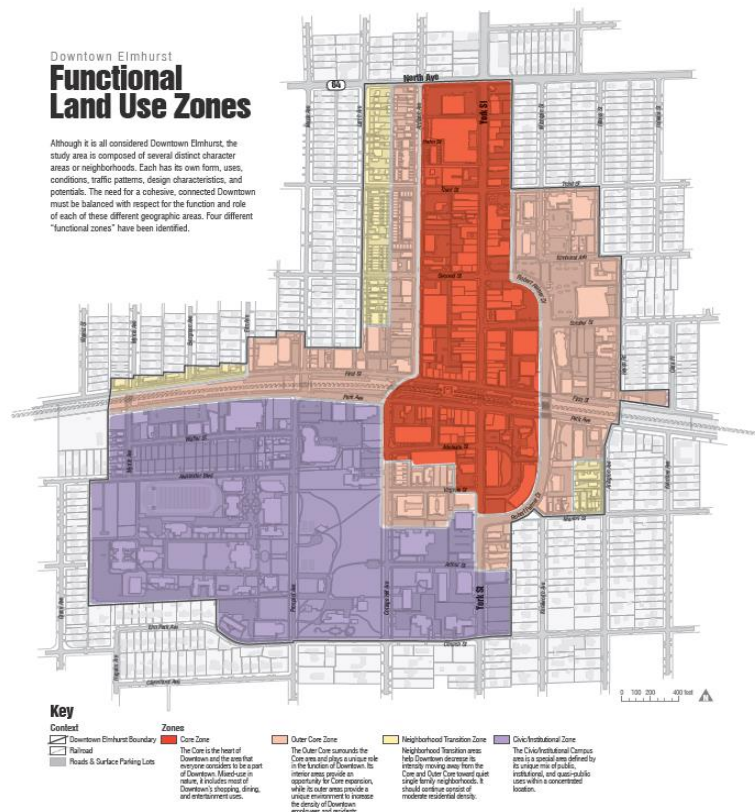


Figure 2 - Functional Land Use Zones

Source: City of Elmhurst

per dwelling unit, and Tier 3, roughly 3/8 of a mile, requires 1.5 parking spaces per unit.

Density is another factor accounted for in the Downtown Plan with minimum square footage recommended for studio, 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom, and 3 bedroom residential units.

Since these changes have been put into effect, Downtown Elmhurst is thriving again with new business and residential development. The downtown population has increased from 360 in 1990 to 945 in 2016 with more to come - in 2016 192 luxury apartments were added in a development called Elmhurst 255 and in 2018 another 165 will be added in a development designed by Opus Group. Even though minimum parking requirements are 1.5 spaces (Elmhurst 255) and 0.5 spaces (Opus Group) per unit for these developments, they both offer more than the minimum at 1.74 and 1.2 parking spaces respectively.

At the time of writing, a copy of the approved 2016 Downtown Plan can be obtained [here](#).

## A Developer's Perspective

A municipality can only do so much to encourage TOD. A developer is the entity who ultimately builds such developments and they need to be wise investments. A. Sean O'Gorman, Jr., Project Architect with FitzGerald Associates Architects, provided an architect and developer's perspective on TOD.

FitzGerald Associates Architects has capitalized on the TOD movement, having completed a variety of successful projects that implement TOD principles. While many of these developments are in the City of



Figure 3 - Clarendon Hills's new TOD development - 229 Park Ave  
Source: FitzGerald Associates Architects

Chicago, FitzGerald has also completed projects in Oak Park, Wheaton, Evanston, and is currently planning additional projects in Clarendon Hills and Villa Park, among others. Their Clarendon Hills project was particularly interesting for the purpose of this workshop in that it is a testament to the fact that TOD is not a tool that can only be utilized by large municipalities - small municipalities (Clarendon Hills had 8,658 residents in

2014) stand to reap the benefits of TOD as well.

Figure 3 shows a rendering of the TOD style development FitzGerald has designed for Clarendon Hills. Called 229 Park Avenue, its TOD elements are clear - it includes 42 residential units with one parking

space per unit, ground floor retail, and several live-work units (where both a home and small business are located in the same space), adjacent to the Village's Metra station and other downtown establishments. As TOD and urban design often go hand in hand, the building has been designed with many outward facing windows to produce an eyes-on-the-street effect for security, a fourth floor that is set back from the bottom three so the building doesn't look as tall and blends in more with the surrounding structures, parking that is hidden in a garage within the structure, and prioritization of pedestrian access over other modes of transportation.

No matter your municipality's size, proper design and function can allow a TOD to work for you. Of course, an integral part of a successful TOD is its transit component...

## Metra

The common denominator with most TOD in DuPage and the rest of the suburban Chicago region is its proximity to a Metra station. As the nation's fourth largest commuter rail system, with all lines terminating in downtown Chicago and able to bypass highway traffic, Metra has become an established and attractive transit network well known and well utilized by suburban dwellers. Naturally Metra is supportive of a development style that supports utilization of their service. Kristen Andersen, Principal Planner at Metra, provided an overview of the Metra system and how it interacts with TOD.

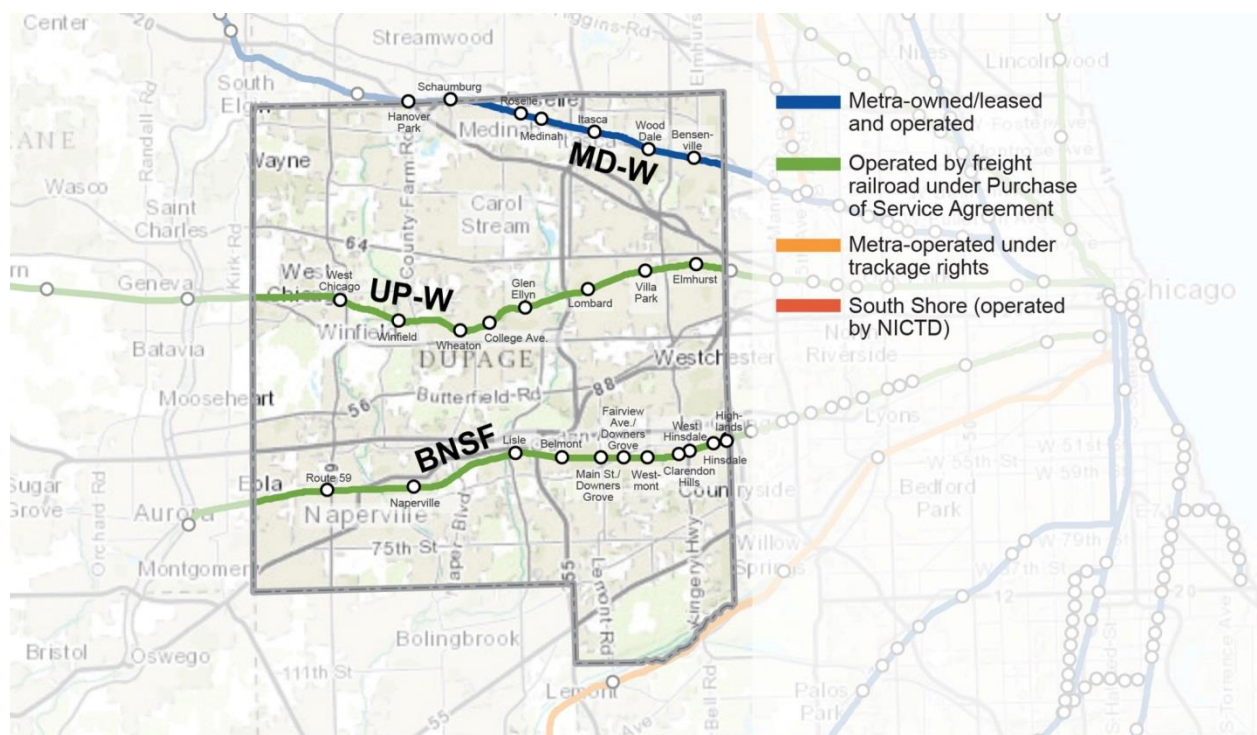


Figure 4 - Metra System Operation Agreements Map

Source: Metra

Metra operates three lines in DuPage County (Figure 4) - the Milwaukee West, the Union Pacific West, and the BNSF - with a total of 26 DuPage stops. Some stations are located in low density areas while others are in a municipality's downtown area.

Metra's role with TOD is largely that of support as their ability to build new lines or revise current ones is very limited. Services they can provide include technical assistance, facilitating of coordination with freight railroads (who own most of the tracks Metra utilizes), serving as a pass-through agency for state/federal grants, participating in funding partnerships, and conducting land swaps. In addition, many programs and resources are available for municipalities looking to implement TOD around Metra stations, including the following:

- Metra Community Enhancement Program
- Metra/Uber Marketing Partnership
- Metra rider count and survey data
- RTA TOD Publications
- RTA Community Planning Program
- CMAP Local Technical Assistance Program
- Illinois Commerce Commission Crossing Safety Improvement Program

Currently most Metra passengers drive from their house to a station. Only one station in DuPage County has fewer than 30% of riders who drive to and park at the station (Clarendon Hills). In contrast, six have greater than 60% of riders who drive to and park at the station (Hanover Park, Schaumburg, Roselle, Medinah, Route 59, and Belmont). Thus there appears to be untapped demand for TOD around Metra stations.

All in all, Metra is a supportive partner every step of the way. Further information on their programs and others can be found on the RTA website [here](#). Of course not all municipalities have a Metra station. If your municipality doesn't, there are still ways to fulfill the transit aspect of TOD...

## Ride Sharing

The largely auto-oriented suburbs can make implementation of transit systems difficult. While Metra and Pace Suburban Bus currently serve the region, their scope and competitiveness with the automobile is lacking. However, ride sharing, or shared mobility, is a recent solution to this issue and one that can potentially assist municipalities that don't have sufficient transit service to implement TOD. Colin Murphy, Research Analyst at the Shared-Use Mobility Center gave a presentation on how ride sharing can fill the gaps of transit service in suburban areas like DuPage County and allow all municipalities to implement TOD.

Ride sharing includes a litany of different modes. These include ride sharing (Uber and Lyft-style taxi services), person-to-person car sharing (rent someone's owned vehicle), 1-way car sharing (hourly car rental), shuttles/carpooling, and bike sharing. Ride sharing is important to mobility in DuPage County for a variety of reasons, including a reduction in reliance on private automobiles; filling gaps in transit, especially at night or on weekends; providing first/last mile connections between transit and

jobs/residences; supporting sustainable and walkable communities; not requiring high capital costs to implement quickly; and not requiring as much public investment as other transportation modes.

According to the Transit Cooperative Research Program Report 188, a key finding is that the more people use shared modes, the more likely they are to also use public transit, own fewer cars, and spend less on transportation overall. Thus, as ride sharing services continue to expand the easier it will be to establish TOD practically anywhere.

## Conclusion

DuPage County has always been a great place to live and with TOD it can be made even better. Proper utilization of TOD can allow your municipality, large or small, connected to Metra and Pace routes or not, to thrive and continue to grow for years to come.

Founded in 1962, the [DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference](#) (DMMC) is a council of municipal governments representing over 1,000,000 people. A coalition of cities and villages, the Conference works to voice municipal concerns on local, regional, state, and national issues. It also serves its members and the region by fostering intergovernmental cooperation. The Conference is a not-for-profit organization supported by membership dues and grants.