



# Creating Connected Communities:

A Guidebook for Improving Transportation Connections for Low- and Moderate-Income Households in Small and Mid-Sized Cities





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Prepared for:  
U.S. Department of Housing  
and Urban Development  
Washington, D.C.

Prepared by:  
Center for Transit-Oriented  
Development

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*Creating Connected Communities* was prepared by the Center for Transit-Oriented Development (CTOD). The CTOD is the only national nonprofit effort dedicated to providing best practices, research, and tools to support market-based development in pedestrian-friendly communities near public transportation. It is a partnership of two national nonprofit organizations—Reconnecting America and the Center for Neighborhood Technology—and a

research and consulting firm, Strategic Economics. Together, the partnership works at the intersection of transportation planning; regional planning; climate change; and sustainability, affordability, economic development, real estate, and investment. CTOD’s goal is to help create neighborhoods where young and old, rich and poor can live comfortably and prosper, with affordable and healthy lifestyle choices and ample and easy access to opportunity for all.

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## Disclaimer

The contents of this report are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or the U.S. government.



## Foreword

*Creating Connected Communities* seeks to bridge the housing-transportation gap by crafting an easy-to-read, illustrated guide for local decision-making officials and other interested groups in small-sized and mid-sized cities. HUD offers the report as a research-based tool for leaders of small-sized and mid-sized communities. The tool will help community leaders better understand and articulate the range of benefits they can realize by integrating a multimodal transportation system with affordable housing and by addressing the challenges that small-sized and mid-sized cities face in improving mobility and accessibility for their residents.

Local leaders make decisions every day that affect the quality and affordability of transportation and housing in their communities, whether deciding to build a new street, repave an existing road, locate a school or park, or approve or deny a development proposal. While each decision is made within the context of many unique local factors, local officials across the country share many common goals for their communities, such as providing an affordable, high-quality life for residents; deploying local resources efficiently; supporting the local economy; and strengthening existing neighborhoods.

This guidebook presents strategies that communities can use to help meet these goals by planning and investing in transportation improvements to provide low-income and moderate-income households with affordable, convenient, and reliable options for accessing jobs and other essential destinations, such as schools, community colleges, health care, and other services and amenities.

By preserving existing affordable housing and planning new affordable housing in places where residents have opportunities to walk, bicycle, and take transit to get to work, school, health care, shopping, and parks, so that residents can thrive whether they own one car, two cars, or no car.



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## Executive Summary

This guidebook is intended to provide elected officials, city staff members, community leaders, and other decisionmakers in small and mid-sized cities with a menu of strategies for improving the transportation choices available to low- and moderate-income households. On average, transportation is the second largest household expenditure after housing, and transportation costs are directly related to a key characteristic of housing: location, including proximity to employment, schools, and other essential destinations. By creating connected communities where residents have access to affordable housing and can safely and conveniently meet their daily needs on foot, bicycle, public transit, or in a car, cities can help reduce households' transportation costs, connect workers to jobs, and facilitate upward mobility. Providing access to alternative modes of transportation is particularly important for households without a car, a category that includes 9 percent of all U.S. households and 18 percent of households earning less than \$35,000. In addition to improving mobility for households with limited access to vehicles, creating connected communities with multiple transportation options can benefit all residents by promoting health and safety, contributing to a more resilient local economy, and improving the efficiency of public spending.

### Creating Connected Communities in Small and Mid-Sized Cities

Chapters I and II of the guidebook discuss the benefits of creating connected communities in more detail and address the specific housing and transportation challenges that small and mid-sized cities face. The guidebook is tailored to cities with populations of less than 250,000, a category that includes a wide range of different places—from rural and suburban bedroom communities to communities that serve as the central cities of their region. Although every place has unique characteristics, small and mid-sized cities often (though

*The average cost of owning a car ranges from \$6,000 to \$12,000 year.*

not always) share some common features, including the following, that set them apart from their larger counterparts:

- Fewer transit options. Transit service may be limited to paratransit, on-demand shuttles, or local bus, although small cities in larger metropolitan areas may be served by regional rail or bus systems.
- Limited city staff capacity. Smaller staff sizes can mean that cities have limited capacity to plan and invest in significant new pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements—but it can also mean that decisionmaking is more centralized and new approaches can be adopted more quickly.
- Limited financial resources. A lack of resources can be a particularly acute problem for smaller cities, which often rely in part on state revenue sharing and may have a limited local tax base. In addition, some federal resources that are frequently used to address housing and transportation in larger cities are less likely to be available in small and mid-sized cities. Finally, small cities in a larger metropolitan area may face intense competition with their neighbors for transportation and other funds that are allocated at a regional level.
- Greater reliance on other governmental entities—including larger neighboring cities, independently operated transit authorities, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)<sup>1</sup>, and state and federal agencies—for services and funding.
- More affordable market-rate housing, but fewer subsidized units.

<sup>1</sup> Metropolitan planning organizations are federally mandated agencies charged with regional transportation planning and allocating federal transportation funding in urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or more.

## Executive Summary

The examples and strategies provided in this guidebook are designed to address these specific challenges that small and mid-sized cities face. Given the limited staff capacity and financial resources of many small and mid-sized cities, the guidebook emphasizes looking for state, regional, federal, and private-sector partnerships that can help expand local capacity and making incremental, relatively low-cost changes that can add up to significant improvements in the mobility of low- and moderate-income residents. The guidebook also encourages cities to consider the needs of residents of both market-rate and subsidized affordable housing and to include providers of all types of transit—including paratransit services and private shuttles operated by local business groups or service providers and local and regional buses and rail—in the planning process. At the same time, however, most of the examples and strategies discussed in the guidebook are also relevant to larger cities, counties, and other communities facing similar challenges concerning the integration of transportation with affordable housing.

## Housing and Transportation Case Studies

This guidebook includes many examples of housing and transportation challenges that small and mid-sized cities across the country face and presents strategies that cities have successfully used to address those challenges. In addition, Chapter III provides in-depth case studies of five cities that represent a range of geographic regions, population sizes, and housing and transportation challenges. As summarized below, the case studies illustrate some of the key challenges that many small and mid-sized cities face, including limited transit options, capacity, and financial resources. The case studies also illustrate the impact that cities can have on residents' quality of life, household costs, and ability to access jobs by expanding transportation options and promoting affordable housing in connected communities. The various case study cities have found success in building partnerships with local,

state, regional, and federal partners; directing housing and transportation investments to support established neighborhoods; and making incremental improvements as funding becomes available.

***Gonzales, California*** (population 8,500), is a small bedroom community in the Salinas Valley, an agricultural region on the central coast of California. Like many of the other small communities in the Valley, Gonzales lacks basic services and amenities, and residents must travel 15 miles to the regional center of Salinas for employment or to meet daily needs. Agricultural workers also struggle to access dispersed jobs in surrounding rural areas. In the absence of adequate bus service or other transportation options, residents who do not or cannot drive have turned to informal means of transportation. In response to these challenges, the regional council of governments established a vanpool program to help agricultural workers access employment opportunities, illustrating the important role that regional partners can play in helping small cities fund and implement transportation programs.

***Traverse City, Michigan*** (population 14,700), is a small city in the northern region of Michigan. The case study compares several affordable housing developments that located in different parts of town. Two of the projects are located in infill neighborhoods where residents can easily access bus stops and jobs, and are served by adequate sidewalks for walking and biking. In contrast, a third project is located at the far northern edge of the city, where residents are relatively isolated and have trouble accessing employment and basic services and amenities. A multi-jurisdictional planning process, funded in part by a HUD Community Challenge Planning Grant through the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, is helping the city and county prioritize where to invest housing and transportation resources to take advantage of existing assets in established neighborhoods.

**Lake Worth, Florida** (population 35,000), is a bedroom community in Palm Beach County that has implemented a variety of bicycle and pedestrian projects to better serve the residents of some of its poorest neighborhoods, while also focusing on improving the quality of its affordable housing stock. The case study illustrates the impact that poor-quality sidewalks, other infrastructure deficiencies, and a disinvested housing stock can have on residents' quality of life, transportation costs, local property values, and the tax base. In addition, the case study shows how local, regional, and federal partnerships and low-cost, incremental improvements can help cities with limited resources address significant housing and transportation challenges.

**Portland, Maine** (population 66,200), is the largest city in Maine. The case study focuses on the Bayside neighborhood, a former industrial area that is undergoing a transformation into an urban gateway with significant mixed-income residential and office development. By targeting the Bayside neighborhood for new, higher intensity, market-rate and affordable development in its land use plans, the city of Portland is taking advantage of the neighborhood's proximity to downtown, its strong pedestrian connections, and the existing concentration of community services and amenities. Bringing new residents to the neighborhood will also help support additional retail and services over time, further enhancing the neighborhood's walkability and strengthening the local economy. The case study also illustrates, however, how institutional barriers—in this case, the lack of a unified transit authority and lack of a state funding source for transit—can pose major challenges for integrating affordable housing and transportation.

**Lakewood, Colorado** (population 143,000), a Denver suburb, is being transformed by a recently opened light-rail line that runs through a number of the city's neighborhoods. The city has worked with the transit agency, local housing developers, and other

regional partners to target affordable housing development to the light-rail stations. The case study shows, however, that a new transit investment alone is not sufficient to make a location accessible to households without cars. New sidewalks and other improvements are also needed to connect residents to transit and other destinations.



## Roadmap of Goals and Strategies

Chapter IV presents a series of strategies that cities or other local governments (for example, towns, villages, unincorporated areas, counties) can use to improve the connections between affordable housing and jobs, schools, shopping, services, and other essential destinations in their communities. The strategies are organized within the following five goals:

- A.** Convene decisionmakers. A multitude of different departments and organizations play a role in providing affordable housing and transportation services in any community. By bringing these decisionmakers together, cities can expand local capacity and help ensure that local, regional, state, federal, and community partners are all working toward a common goal: improving the quality of public services and the efficiency of public spending. The following strategies were discussed under this goal:



## Executive Summary

1. Align city departments around the shared goal of linking housing and transportation policy, planning, and investment decisions.
2. Make housing and transportation integration “business as usual.”
3. Convene regional, state, federal, and community partners.

**B.** Provide multiple transportation options. Providing a variety of transportation options designed to meet local transportation needs is critical to ensuring that low- and moderate-income residents can access employment, schools, parks, and other daily destinations. Both people and cities benefit when a car is not required for every trip. The following strategies are included in this goal:

1. Assess the degree to which the existing transportation network meets the needs of low- and moderate-income riders, and integrate multiple modes of transportation into local planning processes.
2. Coordinate with transit providers to improve connections between affordable housing and jobs, services, and other destinations.
3. Make incremental improvements to facilitate walking, bicycling, and taking transit throughout the city, prioritizing projects that improve connections for affordable housing and other low- and moderate-income residents.

**C.** Promote accessible affordable housing in connected communities. The location and the design of affordable housing can be critical factors in determining the ease with which residents can access daily needs. Many cities already have existing walkable neighborhoods with strong connections to jobs and services. By prioritizing the preservation of existing affordable housing and making it easier to develop new affordable housing in these areas, cities can build on existing assets and help strengthen local neighborhoods. The following strategies were discussed under this goal:

1. Identify existing affordable housing resources and neighborhoods with strong existing connections.
2. Work with local, regional, and state partners to preserve and promote affordable housing in connected communities.
3. Facilitate the development of accessible, affordable housing located in connected communities.

**D.** Support established neighborhoods. In addition to high quality transportation choices and affordable housing, residents must also have access to other key destinations and services such as medical care, jobs, a healthy environment, fresh food, and green space. Many cities already have established neighborhoods where most of these elements are in place; in other cities, more effort may be required to ensure that existing neighborhoods offer a full range of services and amenities. By focusing on enhancing established neighborhoods, cities can build on their existing assets, provide additional opportunities for existing residents, and improve the efficiency of municipal services. This goal includes the following strategies:

1. Facilitate compact development patterns.
2. Create “places for people.”
3. Connect the city’s economic development strategy with its transportation planning.

**E.** Refocus financial resources. Focusing public dollars on critical needs and improving the alignment between housing and transportation investments helps to make optimal use of scarce financial resources. The following strategies are included in this goal:

1. Analyze existing resources and identify opportunities to use them more efficiently.
2. Actively seek out new federal and other funding opportunities.
3. Develop partnerships and programs to facilitate connected communities.

## Chapter I. Introduction

Small and mid-sized communities strive for a good quality of life for their residents. In many places, the challenges of providing affordable housing and access to jobs, schools, services, and amenities are among the biggest barriers to reaching this goal. The purpose of this guidebook is to supply elected officials, city staff, community leaders, and other decisionmakers in small and mid-sized cities with a menu of strategies for providing affordable housing residents and other low- and moderate-income households with more transportation choices in order to create connected communities where residents can easily access the jobs, schools, and services that they need to prosper. This guidebook presents examples and strategies that communities can use to help create more connected communities by:

- Planning and investing in transportation improvements to provide low- and moderate-income households with affordable, convenient, and reliable options for accessing jobs and other essential destinations such as schools, community colleges, health care, and other services and amenities; and
- Preserving existing affordable housing and planning new affordable housing in places that have opportunities for residents to walk, bicycle, and take transit to get to work, school, health care, shopping, and parks, so that residents can thrive whether they own one car, two cars, or no car.

Communities of every size and type can benefit from providing affordable housing and multiple transportation options to low- and moderate-income households. After all, for most households, transportation is the second largest expenditure after housing. The average cost of owning and operating a car in the United States ranges from about \$6,000 to

### Why This Guidebook?

- We have great, affordable residential neighborhoods, but it's difficult for our residents to access jobs without a car.
- We have plenty of jobs, shops, and restaurants, but people who work here can't afford to live here.
- Our community is attracting new households, but there is a risk that existing low- and moderate-income residents will be priced out at their homes.
- Students can't walk safely to school or to the park on their own.
- People with disabilities and older residents who don't drive risk becoming isolated from friends and family, and have trouble accessing critical services.
- Our community would like to make it easier and more appealing for residents to walk, bicycle, and take the bus, but our city has limited resources and is looking to do more with less.
- We are a small city and do not have the infrastructure, resources, or staff available to larger cities.

If you checked any of these boxes, then this guidebook is for you.

\$12,000 a year.<sup>2</sup> Cost may price some people out of vehicle ownership; others may not drive because they are too young, have health challenges or other impairments that prevent them from driving, or prefer to walk, bicycle, or take transit instead. Overall, 9 percent of U.S. households do not own a car. Among households earning less than \$35,000 a year, this figure rises to 18 percent.<sup>3</sup> Providing alternatives to driving—including safe and accessible options for walking, bicycling, taking public transit—can help reduce the amount that households spend on transportation, and improve access to well-paying jobs both for residents

<sup>2</sup> Depending on gas mileage and miles driven. AAA, *Your Driving Costs*, 2013, <http://newsroom.aaa.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/YourDrivingCosts2013.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Calculated by the Center for Transit-Oriented Development from U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 2009 National Household Travel Survey, 2009, <http://nhts.ornl.gov>.

who own a car and those who do not. This in turn frees up income for households to build wealth or spend on other important needs, promotes upward mobility and improved quality of life, and generates spending and jobs in the local economy. Moreover, creating more connected communities can encourage healthier, more active lifestyles, create efficiencies for municipal budgets, and contribute to stronger, more resilient local economies.

## Creating Connected Communities in Small and Mid-Sized Cities

This guidebook is tailored to cities with populations of less than 250,000, a category that includes a wide range of different places—from rural and suburban bedroom communities, to communities that serve as the central cities of their region. While every place has unique characteristics, cities with populations of less than 250,000 do tend to share some specific features. By comparison with larger cities, small and mid-sized cities often (though not always) share the following characteristics:

- Fewer transit options. Transit may be limited to local bus service, shuttles, or paratransit rather than rail or rapid bus, although small cities in larger metropolitan areas may be served by regional rail or bus systems.
- More limited city staff capacity. Smaller staffs can mean that small and mid-sized cities have less capacity to plan and invest in new pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements, but it can also mean that decisionmaking is faster and more centralized, and that new approaches can be adopted more quickly.
- Limited financial resources. A lack of resources can be a particularly acute problem for smaller cities, which often rely in part on state revenue sharing and may have a limited local tax base. In addition, some federal resources that are frequently used to

## Key Terms & Concepts

***Affordable housing:*** Market-rate or subsidized housing units that cost less than 30 percent of a low- or moderate-income household's income and provide residents with a healthy, safe, and stable place to live. For example, to a household earning \$40,000 a year, affordable housing would cost no more than \$12,000 a year (or \$1,000 a month) including rent or mortgage payments as well as utilities, insurance, and other associated costs.

***Connected communities:*** Places where residents have access to affordable housing and can safely and conveniently meet their daily needs on foot, bicycle, and public transit, as well as in a car.

***Low- and moderate-income households:*** Low-income households are commonly defined as earning less than 80 percent of area median income (AMI) as determined by HUD for each metropolitan region in the country. Moderate-income households earn between 80 and 120 percent of AMI.

***Public transit:*** Local bus, rapid bus, light rail, commuter rail, paratransit, shuttles, and other forms of transportation that are available to the public.

***Small and midsize communities:*** Cities with populations under 250,000. Although the information in this guidebook is targeted to small and midsize communities, the guidebook is also likely to be relevant to larger cities, counties, and other communities facing similar issues around the integration of transportation with affordable housing.

address housing and transportation in larger cities are less likely to be available in small and mid-sized cities. Finally, small cities in a larger metropolitan area may face intense competition with their neighbors for transportation and other funds that are allocated at a regional level.

- Greater reliance on other governmental entities—including larger neighboring cities, independently operated transit authorities, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)<sup>4</sup>, and state agencies—for services and funding.
- More affordable market-rate housing, but fewer subsidized units.

The examples and strategies provided in this guidebook are designed to address these specific characteristics of small and mid-sized cities. In particular, the guidebook addresses a broad range of transit options, focusing on local bus and shuttle services; discusses opportunities and challenges related to market-rate and subsidized affordable housing; recommends incremental changes that cities can make without incurring substantial costs or unduly burdening city staff; and encourages cities to look for regional, state, and federal partnerships that can help expand local capacity. At the same time, however, most of the strategies discussed in the guidebook are also relevant to larger cities, counties, and other communities facing similar issues around the integration of transportation with affordable housing.

## Using this Guidebook

Following this introduction, the guidebook is organized into three main chapters.

**Chapter II** discusses the links between transportation access and housing affordability, how communities of every size and type can benefit from providing low- and moderate-income households with multiple

transportation options, and the specific challenges that small and mid-sized cities face. As the second largest expenditure for most households after housing, transportation is a critical component of affordability.

**Chapter III** provides case studies of the transportation and housing challenges that small and mid-sized communities around the country face and the strategies that cities have used to address these challenges. The case studies profile transportation and housing issues that neighborhoods in five small and mid-sized cities face: Traverse City, Michigan; Gonzales, California; Portland, Maine; Lakewood, Colorado; and Lake Worth, Florida. Communities can turn to these case studies to better understand how transportation and housing affordability issues play out in a variety of settings.

**Chapter IV** provides a series of strategies and actions for improving transportation options for low- and moderate-income households. Communities can select specific strategies and actions from this “menu of options” to use in meeting their own specific needs. The strategies and actions focus on providing low- and moderate-income households with a wide variety of transportation options, so people can access their daily needs—including work, school, shopping, social and recreational activities, and other destinations—without relying solely on an automobile.

The appendices include an annotated bibliography of resources related to transportation and housing affordability (Appendix A) and a description of the Housing + Transportation Affordability Index tool used in the Chapter III case studies (Appendix B).

<sup>4</sup> Metropolitan planning organizations are federally mandated agencies charged with regional transportation planning and allocating federal transportation funding in urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or more.





## Chapter II. Transportation and Housing Affordability Link

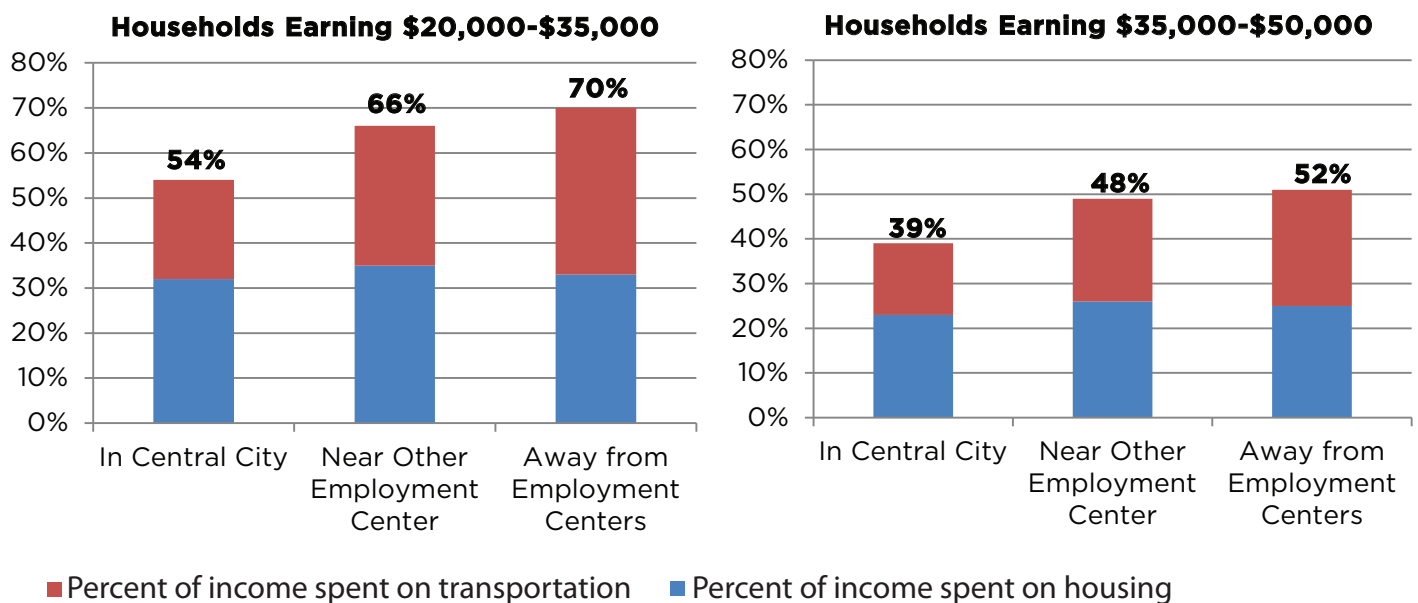
In communities large and small, many families face a tradeoff between saving money on housing, or saving money and time on transportation. On average, transportation is the second largest household expenditure after housing, and transportation costs are directly related to a key characteristic of housing: location. As families move farther from center cities and other job centers in search of cheaper housing, their transportation costs often increase significantly. For low- and moderate-income households, this tradeoff can be particularly challenging. As Figure 1 shows, the combined cost of housing and transportation increases with distance from job centers, with the impacts felt most heavily by lower income households.<sup>5</sup> Transportation costs vary not only with distance from employment, but also with other neighborhood characteristics. For example, research shows that while

*Average household transportation costs for the typical household rose by 33 percent between 2000 and 2010, while housing costs rose by 52 percent. In comparison, median household income increased just 25 percent.*

the typical household spends 19 percent of its income on transportation, households living in auto-dependent neighborhoods spend 25 percent, and households living in neighborhoods where they can easily walk, bicycle, or take transit to access jobs and other daily needs spend just 9 percent.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Based on average expenditures in 28 metropolitan areas. Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology and Virginia Tech, Housing & Transportation Cost Trade-offs and Burdens of Working Households in 28 Metros, July 2006, <http://www.nhc.org/media/documents/chp-pub-hl06-cnt-report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Based on an analysis of the 2003 Community Expenditure Survey microsample data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Source: Center for Transit-Oriented Development, Realizing the Potential: Expanding Housing Opportunities Near Transit, April 2007, <http://www.ctod.org/pdfs/2007RealizingPotential.pdf>.



**Figure 1. Percent of Income Spent on Housing and Transportation by Neighborhood where Households Live**

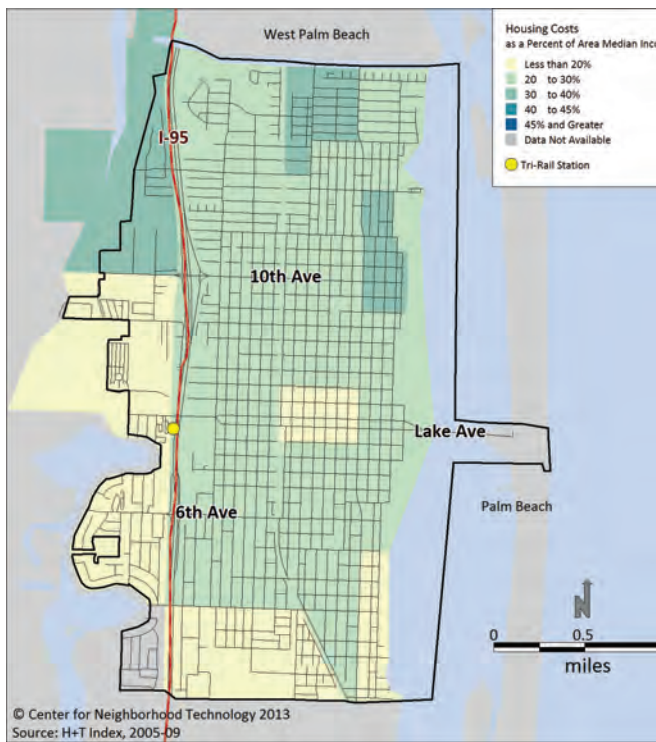
Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology and Virginia Tech, 2006

Affordable housing developers also have to make tradeoffs between low land costs and high transportation costs in deciding where to locate new subsidized units. Land located in close proximity to employment centers, bus or rail transit, services, and amenities is often more expensive than land located at the periphery of a city, and may be fragmented among multiple different property owners. As a result, many developers determine that building in neighborhoods

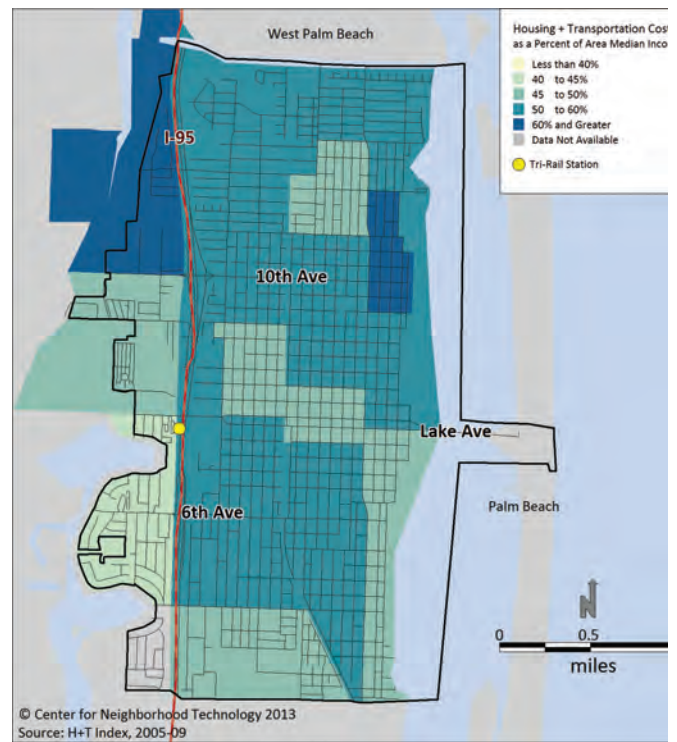
where residents can easily walk, bicycle, or take transit is not financially feasible, and instead develop units in places where residents require one or two cars per household to access jobs, schools, and other destinations. This can frustrate the purpose of housing assistance by increasing households' expenditures on transportation, even as they save money on housing.

## Understanding Housing & Transportation Affordability at the Neighborhood Level

The maps below illustrate the impact that transportation costs can have on affordability for households, using the city of Lake Worth, Florida (one of the case study cities profiled in Chapter III), as an example. The map on the left shows average housing costs in each census tract as a percent of area median income (AMI). In most of the census tracts, housing costs between 20 and 30 percent of all of area median income; in a few, costs are in the range of 30 to 40 percent of AMI. The map on the right factors in transportation costs. Together, the combined cost of housing plus transportation falls between 50 and 60 percent of AMI in most neighborhoods, indicating that households in Lake Worth that have relatively affordable housing may still struggle to pay for the combined cost of housing and transportation.



**Housing Costs as a Percent of Area Median Income**



**Housing + Transportation Costs as a Percent of Area Median Income**

Meanwhile, the burden that families face in paying for the combined cost of housing and transportation is increasing. Despite the recession that began in 2008, average household transportation costs for the typical household rose by 33 percent between 2000 and 2010, while housing costs rose by 52 percent. By comparison, median household income increased just 25 percent.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Based on Housing + Transportation (H+T®) Affordability Index applied to 2000 Census data and 2006-2010 American Community Survey data for the 25 largest metropolitan areas in the U.S. Costs and expenditures are not adjusted for inflation. Source: Center for Housing Policy and Center for Neighborhood Technology, *Losing*

Many factors are likely contributing to increasing transportation costs, including higher gas prices and the continued decentralization of employment. Studies have found that during the 2000s, jobs continued a decades-long trend of shifting away from the urban core and moving toward the suburbs in virtually all metropolitan areas and industries. Jobs in manufacturing, construction, and retail—industries

Ground: *The Struggle of Moderate-Income Households to Afford the Rising Costs of Housing and Transportation*, October 2012, [http://www.nhc.org/media/files/LosingGround\\_10\\_2012.pdf](http://www.nhc.org/media/files/LosingGround_10_2012.pdf).

## What Makes a Connected Community?

A connected community is a place where residents have access to a range of housing choices and can safely and conveniently meet their daily needs on foot, bicycle, and public transit, as well as in a car. Connected communities have the following characteristics:

- ***Walkable Street Design.*** Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and facilities, such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, street trees, lighting, and bicycle racks, to make walking or bicycling safe and comfortable. A grid-like street network and small blocks can also make it easier and quicker to walk or bicycle.
- ***Places for People.*** Public spaces, including streets, parks, plazas, and campuses of schools and other institutions, that are safe, comfortable, and welcoming, and invite people to connect with each other and build community. (The process of planning, designing, and managing these spaces is known as “placemaking.”)
- ***Connections to Destinations.*** Residents and workers can walk, bicycle, or take public transit to access key goods, services, and



**The Depot Neighborhood development is a proposed affordable housing project in Traverse City, Michigan, that exemplifies many aspects of a connected community. The development is within walking distance of a library, a grocery store, and the downtown area, and served by fixed-route bus services with good connections to other local bus routes. The project will also offer a walkable layout and community gathering spaces. See the Traverse City case study in Chapter III for more information.**

Image source: Habitat for Humanity—Grand Traverse Region

amenities—such as schools, fresh foods and other shopping, open space and recreation, health care, libraries, and other services—and to major employment centers and other regional destinations.



that provide employment to many low- and moderate-income workers—are particularly decentralized.<sup>8</sup> Households, including low-income households, have also continued to shift to the suburbs. Low-income people appear to be moving to the suburbs somewhat more slowly, however, than the population as a whole. When the poor do reach the suburbs, they are less likely than higher income households to locate in suburbs with significant concentrations of employment.<sup>9</sup> The suburbanization of jobs and poor households means that low-income workers are increasingly likely to be dependent on vehicles to access employment, particularly because decentralized jobs tend to be challenging to serve with public transit.

Even as an increasing share of the nation's total population and employment has shifted to the suburbs, demand for housing in downtowns and other complete communities is increasing among some demographic groups.<sup>10</sup> Demographic shifts—including growing populations of seniors and young households as the Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) age and the Millennials (born in the 1980s and 1990s) come into adulthood—are generating increased demand for neighborhoods where residents can walk, bicycle, or take transit to access amenities and services. At the

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Kneebone, *Job Sprawl Revisited: The Changing Geography of Metropolitan Employment* (The Brookings Institution, April 2009), [http://www.brookings.edu/-/media/Research/Files/Reports/2009/4/06\\_job\\_sprawl\\_kneebone/20090406\\_jobsprawl\\_kneebone.PDF](http://www.brookings.edu/-/media/Research/Files/Reports/2009/4/06_job_sprawl_kneebone/20090406_jobsprawl_kneebone.PDF).

<sup>9</sup> Steven Raphael and Michael A. Stoll, *Job Sprawl and the Suburbanization of Poverty* (Metropolitan Policy Program at The Brookings Institution, 2010), <http://ctod.info/assets/0330jobsprawlstollraphael.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, recent research indicates that between 2010 and 2011, many major cities (large and small) grew faster than their suburbs for the first time in decades. The extent to which this is a long-term shift related to changing demographics, or a short-term change related to housing market and unemployment conditions, remains to be seen. William H. Frey, "Demographic Reversal: Cities Thrive, Suburbs Sputter," *The Brookings Institution*, June 29, 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2012/06/29-cities-suburbs-frey>; Smart Growth America, *City Versus Suburban Growth in Small Metro Areas: Analysis of U.S. Census Data in Metropolitan Statistical Areas Under One Million People*, December 2012, <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/city-versus-suburban-growth-in-small-metro-areas.pdf>.

same time, single-person households, roommates, and couples without children now account for most households in most cities, creating more demand for smaller, attached, and rental housing units. In some places, these trends are leading to rising rents and property values in compact, walkable, transit-served neighborhoods, making these neighborhoods less affordable for low-income households and putting long-term residents at potential risk of displacement.<sup>11</sup>

### Housing and Transportation Challenges in Small and Mid-Sized Cities

The housing and transportation challenges described above are national issues that cities of all sizes face. Indeed, much of the research on the links between housing and transportation affordability focuses on the country's larger metropolitan areas. Research specific to small and mid-sized cities is more limited, and the definition of small and mid-sized cities used in this



**Figure 2. A hard-to-see bus stop on the side of the road in Omaha, Nebraska provides no information about bus routes, making the transit system harder to use and less appealing for “riders of choice.”**

Image source: Strategic Economics, 2013

<sup>11</sup> Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy, *Maintaining Diversity in America's Transit-Rich Neighborhoods: Tools for Equitable Neighborhood Change* (Northeastern University, October 2010), <http://www.dukakiscenter.org/storage/TRNEquityFull.pdf>.



**Figure 3. A bus stop in Tulsa, Oklahoma is not connected to any sidewalks, making it difficult for potential riders—particularly disabled riders—to access the station.**

Image source: Brooke Allen, 2013

report—cities with populations less than 250,000—encompasses a wide range of places of many different types. Using information from discussions with local officials and other available information about small and mid-sized cities, however, this guidebook identifies a series of factors that sets small and mid-sized places apart from their larger counterparts, regarding the specific transportation and housing challenges they face.<sup>12</sup>

***First, transit options in many small and mid-sized communities are limited to paratransit, on-demand shuttles, or local bus.***

Many small and mid-sized cities have more auto-oriented land use patterns and lower population densities, and they experience less traffic congestion compared with larger cities. As a result, there may be reduced pressure to encourage alternative modes of transportation; transit options may be limited to local

<sup>12</sup> For more on the unique challenges facing mid-sized cities, see: City of Rochester, NY, “The Mid-size City: Exploring Its Unique Place in Urban Policy. A Summary of the Rochester Conversation on Mid-Size Cities” (Rochester, NY, 2002), [http://www.livable.org/storage/documents/reports/Other/The\\_Mid-Sized\\_City\\_Exploring\\_its\\_Unique\\_Place\\_in\\_Urban\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.livable.org/storage/documents/reports/Other/The_Mid-Sized_City_Exploring_its_Unique_Place_in_Urban_Policy.pdf); Reconnecting America, *Midsize Cities on the Move: A Look at the Next Generation of Rapid Bus, Bus Rapid Transit, and Streetcar Projects in the United States*, December 2012, <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/20121206midsizefinal.pdf>.

bus service, shuttles, or paratransit (rather than rail or rapid bus); and transit ridership may be dominated by “riders of necessity”—that is, people with few other options—rather than “riders of choice.” The lack of a broad ridership base can lead to lower farebox revenues and limited public support for transit, which in turn reduces the quality of the service that transit agencies can provide and further undermines the system’s usefulness and appeal to riders. ***As a result, walking and bicycling can serve an even more important role in providing alternatives to the automobile in small and mid-sized communities than in larger ones with more developed transit systems.*** Smaller communities may lack support for investing in sidewalks and bike lanes, however, because most people expect to drive everywhere they go and may not consider biking or walking to be an essential form of transportation.



**Figure 4. The unincorporated Oakhurst area outside Tulsa, Oklahoma, is an impoverished area where nearly one-half (47 percent) of households earn less than \$35,000 a year, and one in five residents do not own a car. The neighborhood has no sidewalks or streetlights in its residential area, however, and it is not served by public transit. The community was recently the subject of a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA, Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities technical assistance workshop on Supporting Equitable Development, which convened representatives from county, state, and regional departments to develop strategies for addressing the community’s needs.**

Image source: Strategic Economics, 2013



***Small and mid-sized communities may also have more limited staff capacity and financial resources compared with their larger counterparts.***

Smaller staffs can mean that cities have limited capacity to plan and invest in significant new pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements—but it can also mean that decisionmaking is more centralized and new approaches can be adopted more quickly. Although many cities around the country are facing fiscal challenges, a lack of resources can be a particularly acute problem for smaller cities, which often rely, in part, on state revenue sharing and may have a limited local tax base. In addition, some federal resources that are frequently used to address housing and transportation in larger cities are less likely to be available to small and mid-sized cities. For example, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, a flexible source of funds for housing and community development needs, allocates grant funding to cities with populations of at least 50,000 and to other “entitlement” communities<sup>13</sup> on an annual, formula basis, while smaller communities must compete for funds through state or county agencies. Finally, small cities in a larger metropolitan area may face intense competition with their neighbors for transportation and other funds that are allocated at a regional level.

***Small and mid-sized cities are often particularly reliant on counties, transit agencies, regional government, state departments of transportation, and other entities not only for funding, but also for services.*** For example, in many small towns, Main

<sup>13</sup> CDBG funds are provided annually on a formula basis to “entitlement” communities, which include principal cities of metropolitan statistical areas, or MSAs; other metropolitan cities with populations of at least 50,000; and qualified urban counties with populations of at least 200,000 (excluding the population of entitled cities). U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “Community Development Block Grant Entitlement Communities Grants,” accessed April 15, 2013, [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/communitydevelopment/programs/entitlement](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs/entitlement).

Street is a highway under the control of the state department of transportation, which not only paves and maintains it, but also makes decisions about widening the road.

On the housing side, many small and mid-sized cities benefit from having lower housing costs overall compared with those in some larger cities. Worker incomes may also be lower, however, and families can still struggle with housing cost or quality. Some low- or moderate-income residents may find that the only housing they can afford is of poor quality or is unsafe. Other households may pay more to rent than they would to own, but struggle to save up a sufficient downpayment to buy a house. In cities of all sizes, many low- and moderate-income homeowners have struggled with foreclosures in recent years, while others are “under water” on their mortgages, owing more than the market value of the home. Substandard, foreclosed, or abandoned housing can affect not just individual households, but also the entire neighborhood, dragging down the property values of adjacent housing units and affecting the community’s overall quality of life.

## Why Provide Multiple Transportation Options?

Walking, bicycling, and transit are critical modes of transportation for many people. For some, this is a lifestyle choice; for others, a necessity. After all, the cost of owning and operating a car ranges from about \$6,000 to \$12,000 a

***The average cost of owning a car ranges from \$6,000 to \$12,000 a year.***

year.<sup>14</sup> While cost may price some people out of vehicle ownership, others may not drive because they are too young, too old, or disabled. Overall, 9 percent of U.S. households do not own a car. Among households

<sup>14</sup> Depending on gas mileage and miles driven. AAA, *Your Driving Costs*.

earning less than \$20,000 a year, this figure rises to 26 percent (Figure 5).<sup>15</sup> For these households, having access to alternative modes of transportation is critical for getting to work, school, shopping areas, healthcare providers, or the park.

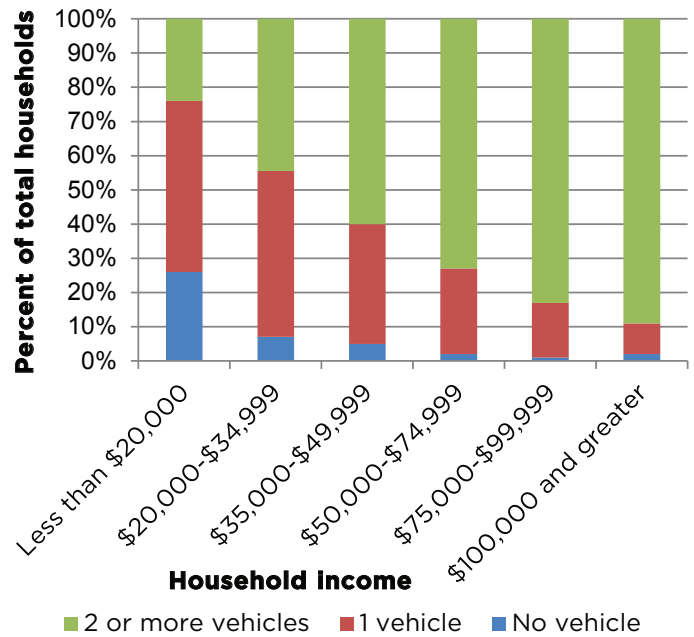
Even for households that do own a car, being able to walk, bicycle, or take a bus for some trips can help ensure that everyone can get where they need to go. Households take many types of trips during the course of a day or week, traveling to and from work, school, shopping, and many other destinations. Different types of trips may require different transportation modes depending on where the destination is located. For example, in just one household on a given day, one parent might take a commuter bus to get to a job across town; the other parent might drive to work and drop off a young child at day care on the way; a school-aged child might walk or bike to school; and a grandparent could take a local bus or shuttle to a healthcare appointment or community center. For seniors or disabled people who cannot drive, being able to walk or take transit to their destinations may be a lifeline, allowing them to access critical services and helping them to avoid social isolation.

Beyond fulfilling basic transportation needs, walking, bicycling, and taking transit can benefit people’s health and the environment. People who live in places with a higher concentration of jobs and households, a more connected roadway, sidewalk, and bicycle network system, and transit access tend to walk and bicycle more.<sup>16</sup> This increased physical activity may in turn lead to better physical fitness, lower rates of obesity and other health problems, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollution levels.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Calculated by the Center for Transit-Oriented Development from U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 2009 National Household Travel Survey.

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence D. Frank, Sarah Kavage, and Todd Litman, Promoting Public Health through Smart Growth (Smart Growth BC), accessed April 8, 2013, [http://www.vtppi.org/sgbc\\_health.pdf](http://www.vtppi.org/sgbc_health.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 5. Vehicle Ownership by Household Income**

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 2009

## Why Create Connected Communities?

By ensuring that low- and moderate-income residents have access to high-quality affordable housing and can get to where they need to go, local governments can help improve quality of life for their residents, build a stronger, more resilient local economy, and improve the efficiency of public spending. This section summarizes each of these three categories of benefits in turn, drawing on the research presented above on the links between transportation and housing affordability.

### 4. Improved Quality of Life

Providing households with affordable housing and transportation options can facilitate upward mobility, reduce dependency on the automobile, and promote public health and safety.

- **Facilitate upward mobility.** Providing low- and moderate-income households with many different transportation options and opportunities for affordable housing can help families achieve



upward mobility by reducing the combined cost of housing and transportation. As discussed above, transportation costs are on average the second largest household expenditure after housing, and can vary significantly by location and land use context. Households living in connected communities with access to transit and a mix of jobs and services spend just 9 percent of their household budgets on transportation, compared with 19 percent for the average U.S. household.<sup>18</sup> The savings from living in a connected community are particularly important to low- and moderate-income households, which tend to spend a higher share of their household income on transportation. For example, transportation accounts for 55 percent of the budget of an average very-low-income household, compared with less than 9 percent of a high-income household’s budget.<sup>19</sup> Low- and moderate-income households that can spend less on transportation will have more money to invest in education or job training, and to build wealth and save for homeownership.

- ***Reduce dependency on the automobile.***

Providing alternatives to the private automobile, so that residents can access jobs, schools, health care, and other important goods and services with or without a car, can benefit everyone in the community by reducing household transportation

costs and encouraging increased physical activity. For households that do not have access to a private automobile, alternative modes of transportation can be essential to finding and keeping a job, arriving to school on time, accessing health care, and taking care of other daily needs

- ***Promote public health and safety.*** Providing safe, convenient, and appealing options for walking, bicycling and taking transit facilitates a more active lifestyle. A wider range of transportation options can also improve mobility for the elderly and disabled, enabling people to remain active in their communities and access health care and other goods and services.

## 5. More Resilient Local Economy

Affordable housing and bicycle, pedestrian, and transit investments can help create jobs and spending in the local economy and make the local economy more resilient, adaptable, and competitive.

- ***Enhance economic resiliency and competitiveness.*** Creating connected communities can make small and mid-sized cities more competitive, adaptable, and resilient to demographic and economic change. As the example, the Town of Hamburg in upstate New York illustrates (Figure 6) how investing in walkable, people-friendly places can help make a city more attractive to employers, residents, and visitors alike. These types of “placemaking” strategies have become particularly important in helping small and mid-sized cities compete as jobs and workers have become more mobile, and increasingly likely to select locations based on quality of life. For example, workers—particularly younger workers—are increasingly likely to prefer

<sup>18</sup> Center for Transit-Oriented Development, *Realizing the Potential: Expanding Housing Opportunities Near Transit*.

<sup>19</sup> The expenditure percentages are based on weighted average numbers for households for each income level in each tract for the 28 metropolitan areas analyzed. Transportation costs are calculated based on Census 2000, Census Transportation Planning Package 2000, and local transit data. Center for Neighborhood Technology and Virginia Tech, *Housing & Transportation Cost Trade-offs and Burdens of Working Households in 28 Metros*.





**Figure 6. US Route 62, the Main Street of Hamburg, New York near Buffalo. In 2009, the New York State Department of Transportation worked with community members to redesign the street and implement traffic-calming measures including narrower traffic lanes, on-street parking, and “safety lanes” that provide space for drivers to open their doors safely and also serve as bicycle lanes. The street redesign has made the street safer—in the 2 years since the project was completed, car accidents have dropped by 66 percent—and helped the town halt a 30-year economic decline. Route 62 has become a successful, pedestrian-oriented shopping street. In addition, between 2005 and 2009, property values along the street more than doubled, while the annual number of building permits in the town rose from 15 to 96 during the same period.**

Source: Dennis Gaffney, “Widen Main St.? Community Had Other Ideas, and Thrived,” *New York Times*, August 16, 2013, sec. N.Y./Region, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/17/nyregion/widen-main-st-community-had-other-ideas-and-thrived.html>

Image source: New York State Department of Transportation, 2009

living in neighborhoods with good access to public transit, shopping, and other activities, and to prefer living in a smaller home with a shorter commute rather than a larger home with a longer commute.<sup>20</sup> Employers also place a high value on transportation connectivity and affordable housing. For example, a 2007 national survey of 300 companies found that 69 percent of larger companies (those with 100

or more workers) believed a long commute time increases employee stress, and 67 percent reported that lack of affordable housing was negatively affecting their ability to retain qualified entry-level and mid-level employees.<sup>21</sup>

- ***Create jobs and spending in the local economy.*** Investing in pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure can help generate jobs and spending in the local economy. For example, a

<sup>20</sup> Robert Krueger, “Where Americans Want To Live: New ULI Report, America In 2013, Explores Housing, Transportation, Community Preferences Survey Suggests Strong Demand for Compact Development,” Urban Land Institute, May 15, 2013, <http://www.uli.org/press-release/america2013/>.

<sup>21</sup> Urban Land Institute, “Lack of Affordable Housing Near Jobs: A Problem for Employers and Employees—New Survey from ULI Looks at Impact of Commuting,” Press Release, June 4, 2007, <http://www.housingcolorado.org/images/uploads/47ab69762a6aa.doc>.

2011 study found that for \$1 million invested, bicycle infrastructure projects create about 11 jobs within the state where the project is located, while pedestrian projects create about 10 jobs. By comparison, roadway-only projects with no bicycle or pedestrian facilities create an average of just under 8 jobs during construction (Figure 7).<sup>22</sup> These differences likely reflect the fact that a greater portion of spending on bicycle and pedestrian projects goes to labor-intensive activities such as engineering, design, and construction, while roadway projects devote more spending to mechanized construction equipment, asphalt, and other equipment and materials. Other researchers have calculated that every \$1 billion invested in public transit supports more than 36,000 jobs.<sup>23</sup>

### 6. More Efficient Use of Public Funds

Finally, by integrating transportation and housing planning and investments, communities can help improve the efficiency of government spending by

<sup>22</sup> Heidi Garrett-Peltier, Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure: A National Study of Employment Impacts (Political Economy Research Institute, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, June 2011).

<sup>23</sup> American Public Health Association, At the Intersection of Public Health and Transportation: Promoting Healthy Transportation Policy (Washington, DC), accessed June 11, 2013, <http://www.apha.org/NR/rdonlyres/43F10382-FB68-4112-8C75-49DCB10F8ECF/0/TransportationBrief.pdf>.

reducing costs, increasing revenues, and stabilizing transit ridership.

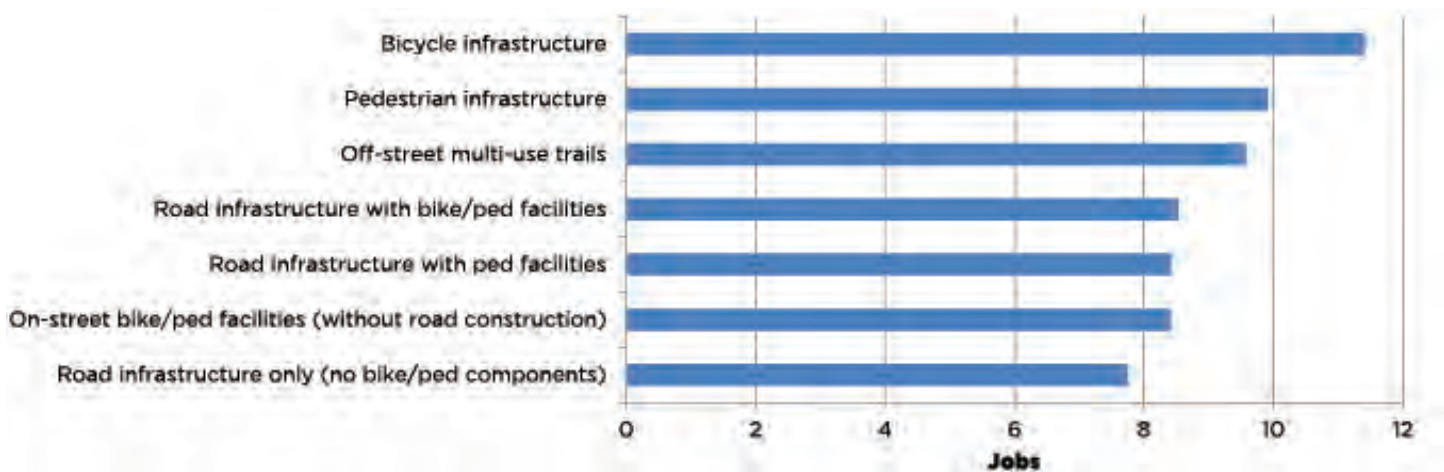
- **Improve the efficiency of government spending on infrastructure and services.**

By coordinating transportation planning and investment with housing and land use decisions, local governments can potentially improve the efficiency of government spending on infrastructure and services. Compared with development in conventional suburban neighborhoods, new development in compact, connected neighborhoods with a mix of housing and transportation options tends to require smaller upfront infrastructure investments and save local governments money on the provision of services such as police, fire, and street maintenance.<sup>24</sup>

- **Increase revenues for local governments.**

Many of the economic benefits described above, including increased local spending, new jobs, and property value increases, can also generate higher revenues for local governments in the form of increased property, sales, and business tax revenues. These increased revenues come from new economic activity, rather than from higher tax rates.

<sup>24</sup> Smart Growth America, *Building Better Budgets: A National Examination of the Fiscal Benefits of Smart Growth Development* (Washington, DC, May 2013), <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/building-better-budgets.pdf>.



**Figure 7. Jobs Created per \$1 Million in Infrastructure Spending, by Infrastructure Type**

Source: Garrett-Peltier, 2011



- ***Stabilize transit ridership and increase farebox revenues for transit agencies, enabling better transit service.*** A 2007 study that compiled results from 150 surveys conducted by public transit agencies from across the country found that 20 percent of transit riders report household incomes of less than \$15,000 a year, and 45 percent report incomes between \$15,000 and \$49,999.<sup>25</sup> By ensuring that affordable housing residents can easily access the local bus or other transit options, transit agencies can help stabilize their ridership base. This in turn can generate more revenues from transit fares, increase competitiveness for federal grants, and spread the cost of operating the transit system across many users, enabling transit agencies to provide better service.<sup>26</sup>

## What Does This Mean for My Community?

The appropriate strategy for integrating transportation and affordable housing will be different in every city depending on many factors, including the city's role within its region,<sup>27</sup> population size, demographic and employment characteristics, historic land use patterns, and transit availability. ***To help communities think about the strategies that may be right for them, this guidebook qualitatively groups small and mid-sized cities into three general categories.*** Note that these place types represent points on a continuum, rather than exclusive categories. A city could have characteristics of more than one place type at any given time, or transition between categories over a period of years.

<sup>25</sup> American Public Transportation Association, A Profile of Public Transportation Passenger Demographics and Travel Characteristics (Washington, DC, May 2007), [http://www.apta.com/resources/statistics/Documents/transit\\_passenger\\_characteristics\\_text\\_5\\_29\\_2007.pdf](http://www.apta.com/resources/statistics/Documents/transit_passenger_characteristics_text_5_29_2007.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Reconnecting America, Locating Affordable Housing Near Transit: A Strategic Economic Decision, Policy Brief, September 2012, <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/20120904AHpolicybrief.pdf>.

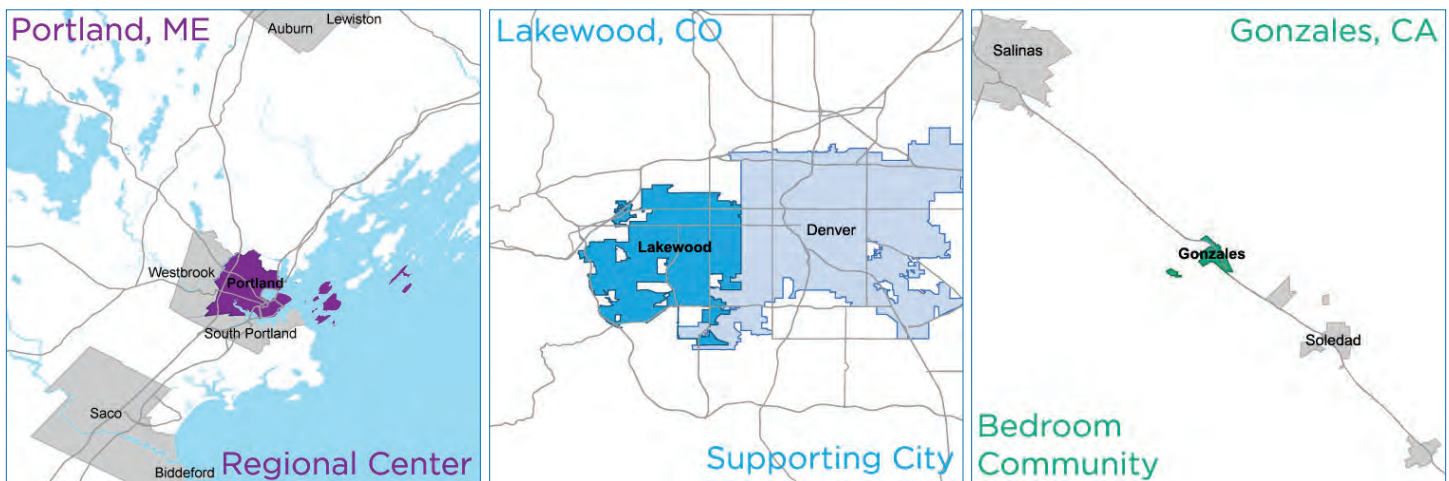
<sup>27</sup> A city's region is typically defined as the metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area as delineated by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

- ***Regional centers.*** Regional centers serve as the administrative, cultural, and/or employment center for a region, and often attract in-commuting workers from across the region. These cities typically have a range of employers and institutions such as state or county government offices, hospitals, universities, or museums. Regional centers often have a significant influence on regional transportation policy and land use planning by virtue of their size relative to neighboring cities, and because state, county, and/or other administrative offices are often located in the regional center. Chapter III of this guidebook includes case studies of two small and mid-sized regional centers: Traverse City, Michigan, and Portland, Maine (populations 14,800 and 65,900, respectively). Other examples include Taos, New Mexico (population 5,700), Greenville, South Carolina (population 60,400), Lansing, Michigan (population 114,600), and Boise, Idaho (population 210,000).
- ***Supporting cities.*** Supporting cities do not serve as the center for their regions, but still have a historic downtown and/or some employment in addition to resident-serving retail. Some workers who live in these cities also work there, while others commute to a regional center or other supporting city for employment. In contrast to regional centers, supporting cities may face more competition for resources within the region, and may be more dependent on state or county agencies for funding. The Lakewood, Colorado (population 144,400) case study in Chapter III illustrates some of the challenges and opportunities that supporting cities face in integrating transportation and housing. Additional examples include Zion, Illinois (24,500) outside of Chicago, Springfield, Oregon (59,700) adjacent to Eugene, New Britain, Connecticut (73,300) in the Hartford region, and Tacoma, Washington outside of Seattle (200,700).

• **Bedroom communities.** Bedroom communities typically do not have a major employment center. Commercial space in these cities consists primarily of retail and personal services serving local residents. Most workers who live in these cities commute to other places for work. Like supporting cities, bedroom communities are typically more dependent on state or regional agencies for resources than are regional centers. Chapter III profiles two bedroom communities: Gonzales, California (population 8,300), and Lake Worth, Florida (population 35,300). Other examples include Castle Shannon, Pennsylvania (population 8,300), in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area; Boardman, Ohio (population 35,400), outside

of Youngstown; and Highlands Ranch, Colorado (population 96,700), in the Denver area.

Understanding a community's role within its region can help decisionmakers think about the transportation connections that residents may need to reach job opportunities, community colleges, healthcare centers, or other essential destinations. Other transportation connectivity needs may depend more on the land use context in a specific neighborhood than on the city's overall role in the region. The following chapter further illustrates the various types of connections that different communities may need to consider to expand transportation options for low- and moderate-income residents, depending on the city's position in the region and on conditions in particular neighborhoods.



**Figure 8. Three case study cities profiled in Chapter III: Portland, Maine (regional center), Lakewood, Colorado (supporting city), and Gonzales, California (bedroom community).**

Image sources: Reconnecting America, 2013.

## Chapter III. Housing and Transportation Case Studies

This chapter presents five case studies of small and mid-sized communities that are facing a variety of challenges related to connecting affordable housing with jobs, schools, services, and amenities. The case studies illustrate how housing affordability and transportation connections can help sustain a high quality of life for residents, deploy local resources more efficiently, and support the local economy. The case studies also demonstrate some of the strategies that cities can use to improve affordability and connectivity for their residents, and the importance of building on existing assets and tailoring strategies to the specific issues and conditions in any given community.

The five case study cities were selected to represent a range of different place types, geographic regions, and population sizes (Figure 9). Within each city, the case studies focus on one or two neighborhoods and/or affordable housing developments. The following case study cities were selected:

- ***Gonzales, California***, a small bedroom community in the agricultural Salinas Valley.
- ***Traverse City, Michigan***, a regional center located on Lake Michigan.
- ***Lake Worth, Florida***, a low-income bedroom community in Palm Beach County.
- ***Portland, Maine***, a regional center and the largest city in Maine.
- ***Lakewood, Colorado***, a supporting city outside of Denver.

The case studies draw on data from the Housing + Transportation Affordability Index tool and the U.S. Census Bureau,<sup>28</sup> interviews with local stakeholders, and recent articles and planning documents. Appendix B provides a description of the Housing +

<sup>28</sup> The Census Bureau data are from the 2000 and 2010 Decennial Censuses and the 2007–2011 American Community Survey.

Transportation Affordability Index, which was used to develop the maps included throughout the case studies.

**Figure 9. Case Study Cities by Place Type and Population Size**

Case Study Community	Place Type	Population (2010)
Gonzales, California*	Bedroom community	8,200
Traverse City, Michigan	Regional center	14,700
Lake Worth, Florida	Bedroom community	35,000
Portland, Maine	Regional center	66,200
Lakewood, Colorado	Supporting city	143,000

\*The Gonzales case study also includes a discussion of issues in the broader Salinas Valley region of California.

### Summary of Findings

The five case studies presented in this chapter cover a wide variety of places facing different transportation and housing affordability challenges. Taken together, however, the case studies illustrate the following important lessons for local leaders to keep in mind as communities work toward improving the integration of transportation and housing:

- ***Many different departments, agencies, and organizations play a role in housing and transportation decisionmaking, and all must have a place at the table in order to create connected communities.***

This is particularly true in small and mid-sized cities, where many state and local agencies are often involved in providing services. For instance, in Portland, multiple transit agencies serve the region and must all work together and with the city to improve connectivity for residents. The Traverse City case study demonstrates that affordable housing developers must also be part of the discussion, since developers make the ultimate decisions about where housing actually gets built. The cities of Lakewood and Denver, along with their housing authorities and the regional transit

agency, have demonstrated a commitment to collaboration by creating a multijurisdictional working group to coordinate their efforts. Forming partnerships with regional agencies can also help expand local capacity, a particular benefit in small and mid-sized communities where limited resources and staff time can limit cities' abilities to take on major new projects.

- ***Providing a variety of transportation options targeted to local needs is critical to ensuring that low- and moderate-income residents can access employment, schools, parks, and other daily needs.*** In small and mid-sized cities, traditional transit (that is, bus or rail) options may be limited and may need to be supplemented with more flexible options. For example, in Gonzales, low-income residents rely on regional bus service to access services and employment in the region's center city or depend on vanpooling to reach dispersed agricultural jobs. In Lake Worth, many senior residents rely on the county's paratransit service. At the same time, children make up a particularly high share of the population in the Tropical Ridge and Royal Poinciana neighborhoods, so providing safe routes for walking or bicycling to schools and parks is particularly critical.
- ***The types of transportation options that residents need can vary, depending on the city's position within the broader region.*** For instance, in Traverse City, Michigan, a regional center, low-income residents who live in housing at the periphery of the city struggle to get downtown and to other areas in the center of the city where services and jobs are concentrated. In contrast, in a bedroom community like Gonzales, California, low-income residents without cars need alternative options for accessing employment, health care, and shopping located 15 miles away in the region's main city of Salinas.
- ***Land use and transportation decisions play an important role in determining the ease with which residents can walk, bicycle, or take public transit to access essential daily needs.*** For instance, by targeting the Bayside neighborhood for new, higher intensity, market-rate and affordable development in its land use plans, the city of Portland is taking advantage of the neighborhood's proximity to downtown and its existing concentration of community services and amenities. Because of the neighborhood's location, land use characteristics, trails, and sidewalks, new residents who move to the neighborhood will be able to easily walk or bicycle to work, medical care providers, jobs, grocery stores, and green space. In addition, by bringing new residents to the neighborhood, the new higher intensity development will help support additional retail and services over time, further enhancing the neighborhood's walkability.
- ***To provide low-income residents with opportunities to achieve upward mobility, local officials and developers should consider location and transportation accessibility in selecting sites for new affordable housing.*** In the Orchard View Terrace development in Traverse City, for example, some residents face difficulties accessing jobs and other daily needs because of the isolated location of the housing development. In contrast, residents in more centrally located affordable housing in Traverse City can easily access jobs, healthy food, schools, and the downtown by using public transportation and bike and pedestrian paths. Better access to these essential destinations can make it easier for residents to participate in the labor force and help reduce household transportation costs, allowing them to build wealth and save for education, job training, or homeownership.



- ***By looking for partnerships and making relatively low-cost improvements, agencies can make their limited financial resources stretch farther.*** The Lake Worth case study shows how cities can partner with local, state, and regional agencies and with foundations and other community partners to fund and implement housing and transportation projects. Lake Worth has also found that low-cost projects, such as striping bike lanes, can significantly affect residents' lives.

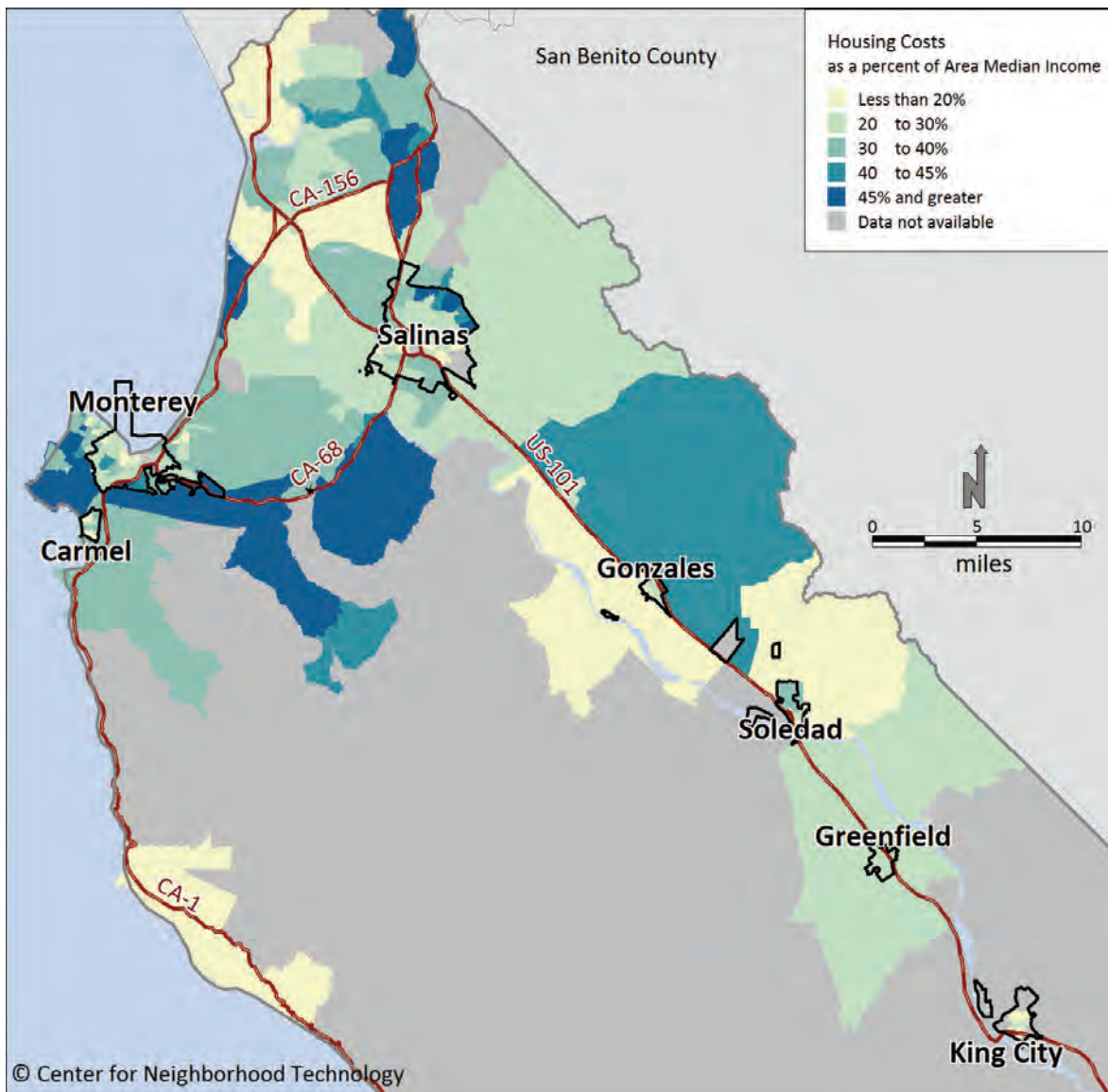
Building on the lessons from the case studies, the following chapter provides a menu of actions that local leaders can take to help improve the connections between transportation and affordable housing in their own communities.

## Gonzales, California, and the Salinas Valley

***The Salinas Valley communities include Salinas, the largest city in Monterey County, and four smaller cities with a large low-income population and agricultural workforce. The smaller communities tend to lack basic services and amenities, and residents must travel to Salinas for employment or to meet daily needs. Limited transportation options within the Valley, however, restrict access for many low-income residents.***

The Salinas Valley is an agricultural region in south Monterey County along the central coast of California. The city of Salinas, with roughly 150,000 people, is the largest city in Monterey County. The valley also includes four smaller cities—Gonzales, Soledad, Greenfield, and King City—that stretch inland along Highway 101, with a distance of about 50 miles

separating Salinas at the north from King City to the south (Figure 10). The Salinas Valley as a whole has low education and job training and is heavily based on an agricultural economy, although Salinas has significantly greater population and employment diversity than the other cities along Highway 101.



**Figure 10.** Housing costs as a percent of area median income in the Salinas Valley and coastal Monterey County. Housing costs more along the coast than in many locations farther east, leading many low- and moderate-income households to move to the Salinas Valley.

Image source: H+T Index, 2005-09

During housing booms in the late 1990s and the mid-2000s, housing prices in coastal Monterey County rose rapidly. As a result, many middle-income residents moved from the coastal communities to the Salinas Valley, creating demand for housing that was more expensive than what typical Salinas Valley workers, many of whom were employed in agriculture, could afford. This new demand has created a two-tiered housing market, where lower income residents tend to live in older neighborhoods on the west side of the highway and middle-income or upper income residents live in newer subdivisions on the east side. Jobs have not moved inland as quickly as households, so employment opportunities in the smaller cities along Highway 101 are still largely agricultural. Many residents of Gonzales, Soledad, Greenfield, and King City who do not work on a farm commute to Salinas or work elsewhere on the coast.

Residents also need to travel long distances for basic services, which are generally lacking in the Salinas Valley. Salinas, as the region's largest metropolitan area, is the closest destination for most retail, healthy food, medical services, and higher education, although some services are also located in King City. For example, Hartnell Community College, the Salinas Valley's only post-secondary educational institution, is located in Salinas. The region's only hospitals and major grocery chains are located in Salinas and King City.

Monterey County has relatively high average car ownership rates, at just fewer than 2 cars per household. Many residents—particularly many low-income agricultural workers—do not own vehicles, however, and are highly dependent on transit and alternative modes of transportation. Just one bus line, which is operated by Monterey-Salinas Transit, connects all the cities between Salinas and King City. The line has very limited service with, at most, an hourly schedule during certain weekday daytime hours and often runs at standing room only. In the absence of public transportation, it is not uncommon for people

without their own vehicles to hitchhike into Salinas. In the long term, the lack of access to basic services, including the lack of transit service, could undermine the competitiveness of the small cities along Highway 101 and their ability to attract and retain residents.

For agricultural workers commuting to farms, informal vanpooling has also become a popular means of transportation. This mode has become widespread, but it is often unsafe, and accidents can result in multiple injuries or death.



**Figure 11. Vanpooling in Monterey County**

Image Source: California Vanpool Authority

In response, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), the region's metropolitan planning organization and council of governments, has established a formal vanpooling program that provides vans with seatbelts and regular maintenance to agricultural workers, with the aim of providing farm workers with better alternatives and getting unsafe vehicles off the road. AMBAG operates the program in partnership with the region's air-quality control district and CalVans, a joint powers public transportation authority comprising local transportation planning agencies from agricultural regions across California.

### **Focus City: Gonzales**

Gonzales is 15 miles to the southeast of Salinas along Highway 101. Gonzales has a primarily low-income



Hispanic population, and its official population count was 8,187 in 2010. City and regional officials,

however, believe that census data does not account for undocumented workers residing in the city. Gonzales



**Figure 12. City of Gonzales. Because Gonzales neighborhoods west of 101 were developed as a grid around the railroad, it is easier to walk from housing to retail and services on the west side. Residents east of 101 must take longer, more circuitous routes through cul-de-sacs to reach their destinations.**

Image source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community



consists mainly of tract housing and provides little in the way of services and amenities, aside from smaller grocery and drug stores and the Gonzales Unified School District. According to available data, 28 percent of workers who live in the city are employed in agriculture.<sup>29</sup>

The city is small and can be easily traversed via foot or bicycle, although Highway 101, which slices through the city, poses some access issues within Gonzales for residents who are not traveling by car. The highway splits the city into two distinct halves, reflecting the two-tiered nature of the region's housing market. An older, more compact neighborhood, centered around the historic downtown, sits to the west of Highway 101. Many of the city's lower income residents live on the west side of the highway, where the median income was \$44,800 a year in 2009. The east side of the highway was developed more recently and more closely resembles suburban style subdivisions designed for automobile transportation. Households on the east of 101 earned a median income of \$78,500 in 2009. In a similar pattern, on average, housing units on the east side cost \$11,360 more per year than housing units on the west side.

As a small city with limited resources, Gonzales places a high priority on developing partnerships with local business associations and local, state, and regional agencies, and is constantly seeking and applying for state and federal grants to expand its capacity.<sup>30</sup> For example, in 2011, the city worked with the local district office of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to develop a work plan for completing a Community to School Pedestrian Plan to evaluate routes that children take to school, identify infrastructure improvements that would encourage walking and bicycling to school, and

improve the city's competitiveness for grants to fund future infrastructure improvements. In addition to assisting with the development of the work plan, Caltrans provided a transportation planning grant to help fund the development of the Community to School Pedestrian Plan, which was completed in 2012. Also in 2012, the city worked with Monterey County and the city of Del Ray Oaks (another small city in the county) to submit an application to HUD to become an entitlement community for the purposes of receiving Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The application was accepted, meaning that the county now receives an annual allocation of CDBG funds for use in the cities of Gonzales and Del Ray Oaks and in unincorporated areas of the county.<sup>31</sup> Prior to their designation as an entitlement community, the cities and the county were required to apply to the state Department of Housing and Community Development for CDBG funding on a project-by-project basis.<sup>32</sup>

### Key Challenges

- ***As a small city with a relatively low-income population, Gonzales has limited staff capacity and financial resources.*** The city's capacity constraints can make planning and implementing housing and transportation programs more challenging.
- ***Households that move farther out to find lower housing costs may also have reduced access to jobs and services.*** Residents who were pushed out of coastal Monterey County to the Salinas Valley due to rising housing prices now have to drive farther for employment and services, spending more time and money on transportation.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2011).

<sup>30</sup> City of Gonzales, "Annual Report," 2012. <http://www.ci.gonzales.ca.us/cms-assets/documents/106071-886448.2012-annual-report-english-final.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> Monterey County Economic Development Department, "2013 Notice of Funding Availability: Community Development Block Grant Program, Application and Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2012-13," <http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/EconomicDevelopment/pdf/plan-updates/Monterey%20County%202013%20NOFA.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> City of Gonzales, "Annual Report," 2012.

- ***Residents of Gonzales and other Salinas Valley communities have difficulty accessing basic necessities and the tools for an improved future.*** As a result, the region is facing a future in which younger generations may leave for better opportunities elsewhere.

### Keys to Success

- ***Providing access to basic services for residents in small communities is vital to a city's success.*** Ensuring that low- and moderate-income residents can get to where they need to go will help local governments build a stronger, more resilient local economy and improve the efficiency of public spending.
- ***In the absence of adequate bus service or other transportation options, residents who do not or cannot drive have turned to informal means of transportation.*** In the Salinas Valley, agricultural workers and others who do not own a car have turned to hitchhiking and informal vanpooling to access jobs and services, creating public safety challenges. The establishment of subsidized and regulated vanpooling programs by the regional council of government will assist many of the small communities in the Salinas Valley to fill this transportation gap.
- ***Small cities should look to local, state, and federal partners to help fund and implement housing and transportation programs.*** Gonzales has successfully partnered with agencies such as the state department of transportation, Monterey County, and neighboring cities to access state and federal funding for transportation and housing programs.

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## Traverse City, Michigan

***Traverse City demonstrates two key factors in linking affordable housing and transportation: (1) housing developers must consider location and accessibility in siting affordable housing due to the impact on future residents' quality of life, and (2) housing and transit advocates must be at the table together to ensure that affordable housing is built in areas where reliable public transportation is provided.***

Traverse City is a small city in the northern region of Michigan with a population of about 14,700. Although Traverse City is relatively small in population, it is the largest city in the northern 21 counties of Michigan and its urban area houses 143,400 people. The city's economy is primarily based on the service industry due to the influx of tourists who flock to the lush hills, vineyards, parks, and beach on Grand Traverse Bay and to other sites that provide ample opportunities for outdoor and water-based activities. Through the work of a local nonprofit, the city provides more than 15 miles of bike and pedestrian trails that enhance residents' and visitors' access to recreational and transportation opportunities. Small businesses and industrial parks, which have built up during the past few decades, also support the local economy.

Within Traverse City, most residents have fairly reliable and consistent access to public transit through the Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA). Within the past few years, BATA has refocused the priorities for its transit service to focus on improving efficiency, expanding routes, and increasing frequency of service. Traverse City is compact, relatively walkable, and serves as an employment hub for many people outside the city. Housing costs tend to be higher in areas closest to the Lake Michigan shore, compelling many lower income households to seek housing farther afield or outside city boundaries altogether.

In the metropolitan area surrounding Traverse City, households trade less expensive housing for higher transportation costs. As with many small towns and rural areas, destinations are farther apart, jobs are farther away, and transit is less available. Fewer transit options and more subdivisions built for the car can



**Figure 13. Traverse City, MI**

Image Source: Northwest Michigan Council of Governments

make it difficult and more expensive to travel to jobs and amenities. Residents who do not drive rely on services like dial-a-ride to access jobs clustered near the shore of Lake Michigan. It may also be harder to access other amenities without a car because of a lower population density to support shops, restaurants, and services. As a result, a typical household earning \$48,900 in 2007 drove 4,900 additional vehicle miles and spent \$2,300 a year more on transportation than one living within city boundaries.

### ***Local and Regional Planning Efforts***

Traverse City (along with six counties in the region—Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, and Wexford) participated in a regional visioning process that culminated in 2009 with the release of “The Grand Vision,” linking land use, transportation, economic development, and sustainability.<sup>33</sup> This vision helped pave the way for Grand Traverse County to receive a HUD Community Challenge Planning Grant through the Partnership for Sustainable Communities

<sup>33</sup> “The Grand Vision,” 2013, <http://thegrandvision.org/>.

in 2010. The communities used those grant funds to prepare the following studies and plans:

- A countywide housing inventory and strategy.
- A new master plan for Grand Traverse County that identifies community values and strategies to enhance those values.
- A new corridor plan for the city of Traverse City that identifies and makes recommendations for improvements for five major streets.<sup>34</sup>

In 2011, the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, whose members include Traverse City, Grand Traverse County, and 10 other counties, was awarded a HUD Regional Planning Grant, in part to develop an implementation framework for the Grand Vision.

### ***Focus Affordable Housing Developments: The Village at Grand Traverse Commons, the Depot Neighborhood, and Orchard View Terrace***

The Village at Grand Traverse Commons in the Kids Creek neighborhood sits on the site of a beautifully constructed old state mental hospital. Through the use of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and Michigan State Historic Tax Credits, a local developer reused the land and buildings, and created a mixed-use campus with retail, office, and approximately 130 residential units, 60 of which are affordable.

Although a large state highway disrupts pedestrian connectivity and creates safety challenges one-half mile from the property, residents of this area are still able to access jobs, healthy food, schools, and the downtown using public transportation and bike and pedestrian paths. The Village at Grand Traverse Commons benefits from a working relationship between BATA (the

transit agency) and the developer of the property. The developers approached BATA when they initiated the first phase of developing the retail shops to ensure that patrons of the development would have transit access. This initial conversation helped secure public transit access for the residents in the Village.

Not far from Kids Creek is the proposed Depot Neighborhood development. Habitat for Humanity and Homestretch, two nonprofit organizations, are developing a project in partnership with Grand Traverse County that is planned to include a total of 21 homeownership opportunities for qualifying low- and moderate-income households. Depot Neighborhood is an infill project located near the edge of the Traverse Heights neighborhood on Eighth Street, one of the corridors identified in Traverse City's corridor study. It is in a transit- and amenity-rich location, within walking distance of a library, a grocery store, and the downtown area. The neighborhood is served by fixed-route bus services with convenient connections to other BATA routes.

Grand Traverse County is contributing to the project by purchasing the property with \$195,000 from the HUD Challenge Planning Grant received in 2010 and by providing an additional \$100,000 for infrastructure improvements to the site. The county has stated that the strategies included in the housing inventory document (completed under the HUD Challenge Planning Grant) were “essential in providing direction for the county in its decision to support the Depot Neighborhood.”<sup>35</sup>

At both the Village at Grand Traverse Commons and the Depot Neighborhood project, residents have access to jobs, adequate sidewalks for walking and biking, and safe access to transit. In contrast, the Orchard View Terrace public housing development is isolated and does not offer residents good access to basic

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<sup>34</sup> Grand Traverse County Planning & Development Department, “Grant Makes Plans Happen in Grand Traverse County,” June 27, 2013, <http://www.co.grand-traverse.mi.us/Assets/Departments/Administration/Press+Releases/2013/Grant.pdf>.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.





**Figure 14. The Kids Creek and Traverse Heights neighborhoods in Traverse City. The urban environment of Traverse City shifts from a grid surrounding downtown to automobile oriented neighborhoods. Low Income Housing Tax Credits have not always been invested in projects in these more compact and walkable neighborhoods.**

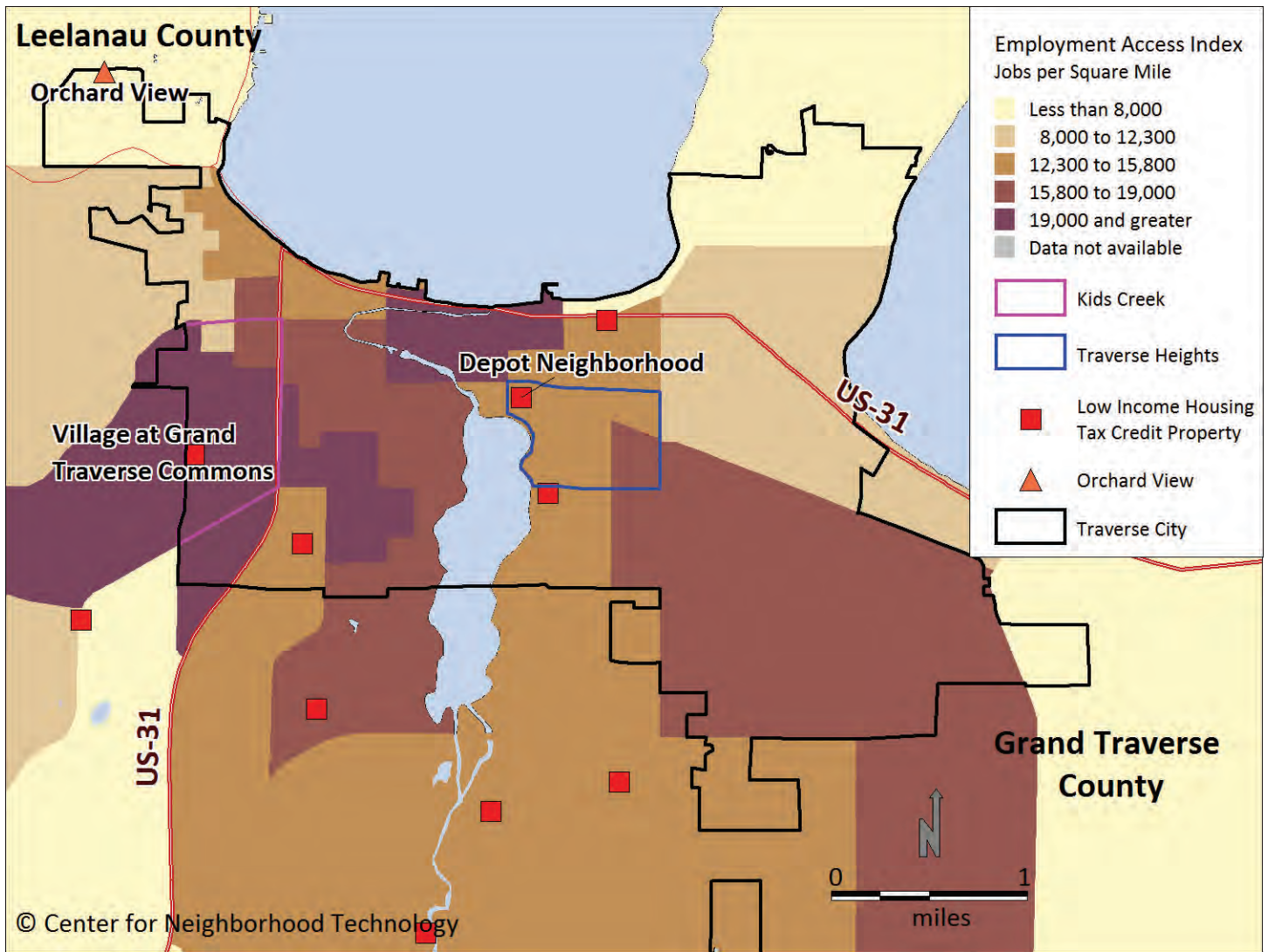
Image source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

services and amenities. The Orchard View Terrace public housing development is located on a two-lane country road at the northern edge of Traverse City—a predominantly car oriented part of town.

Orchard View Terrace houses 65 families, many of whom experience transportation challenges. The Housing Commission came face to face with the challenging location of the complex when it moved its offices to Orchard View Terrace a few years ago. Residents from other parts of the city were unable

to get to the Housing Commission office because of lack of transportation to Orchard View Terrace, so the Housing Commission moved its offices back downtown. This solution worked for the Housing Commission, but for residents still living in Orchard View Terrace, accessing jobs, basic services, and amenities continues to be a challenge.

Traverse City Housing Commission Director Ilah Honson put an even finer point on the issue: “...more of my residents would have the ability to get to a job if they had reliable transportation.”



**Figure 15. Jobs per square mile in Traverse City. Easy access to jobs can lower the cost of transportation in a community. For example, residents of the Village can get to more jobs than at other LIHTC properties throughout the city.**

Image source: H+T Index, 2005-09

### Key Challenges

- **Traverse City is a small city with limited staff capacity and financial resources.**

Such a small city’s capacity constraints can make planning and implementing housing and transportation programs more challenging.

- **Accessibility to destinations matters.**

In Orchard View Terrace, some residents face difficulties accessing jobs and other daily amenities because of the isolated location of the housing development. In the future, should Orchard View Terrace choose to expand housing on the site,

the transportation challenges (as identified by the Director of the Housing Commission) will need to be addressed.

- **There is a tradeoff between housing and transportation costs.** Traverse City is a tourist town, so many jobs and amenities cluster near the Lake Michigan shore where housing costs may be the highest.



## Keys to Success

- **Centrally located, infill locations for affordable housing more efficiently use existing programs and infrastructure.** Locating new affordable housing in Village at Grand Traverse Commons and the Depot Neighborhood project allows residents to take advantage of the Traverse City's 15 miles of bike and pedestrian trails and access transit service provided by BATA.
- **Housing developers must consider location and accessibility in siting affordable housing due to the impact on residents' quality of life.** The Village at Grand Traverse Commons is an example of a mixed-income housing project where the developer recognized the value of locating housing in connected communities.
- **Affordable housing developers must play a greater role in the discussion about the importance of linking residents to public transit.** As evidenced in the Kids Creek example, the housing developer approached the transit officials about locating a bus stop on the development site. Through this initial discussion, existing residents now have better access to public transit because of the relationship between the two entities.
- **By participating in multijurisdictional and regional planning processes, small cities can expand their capacity to plan for, fund, and implement housing and transportation programs.** Although Traverse City itself does not have a great number of planning staff or resources, it gained resources by participating in the regional visioning process. As a result of the multijurisdictional HUD Challenge Planning Grant process, Grand Traverse County is contributing to the Depot Neighborhood by purchasing the property for the project.

- **Coordination and collaboration can be critical to success.** Coordinated local and regional planning efforts involving HUD, Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, Grand Traverse County, and Traverse City resulted in the county's decision to invest in the Depot Neighborhood project in Traverse City.

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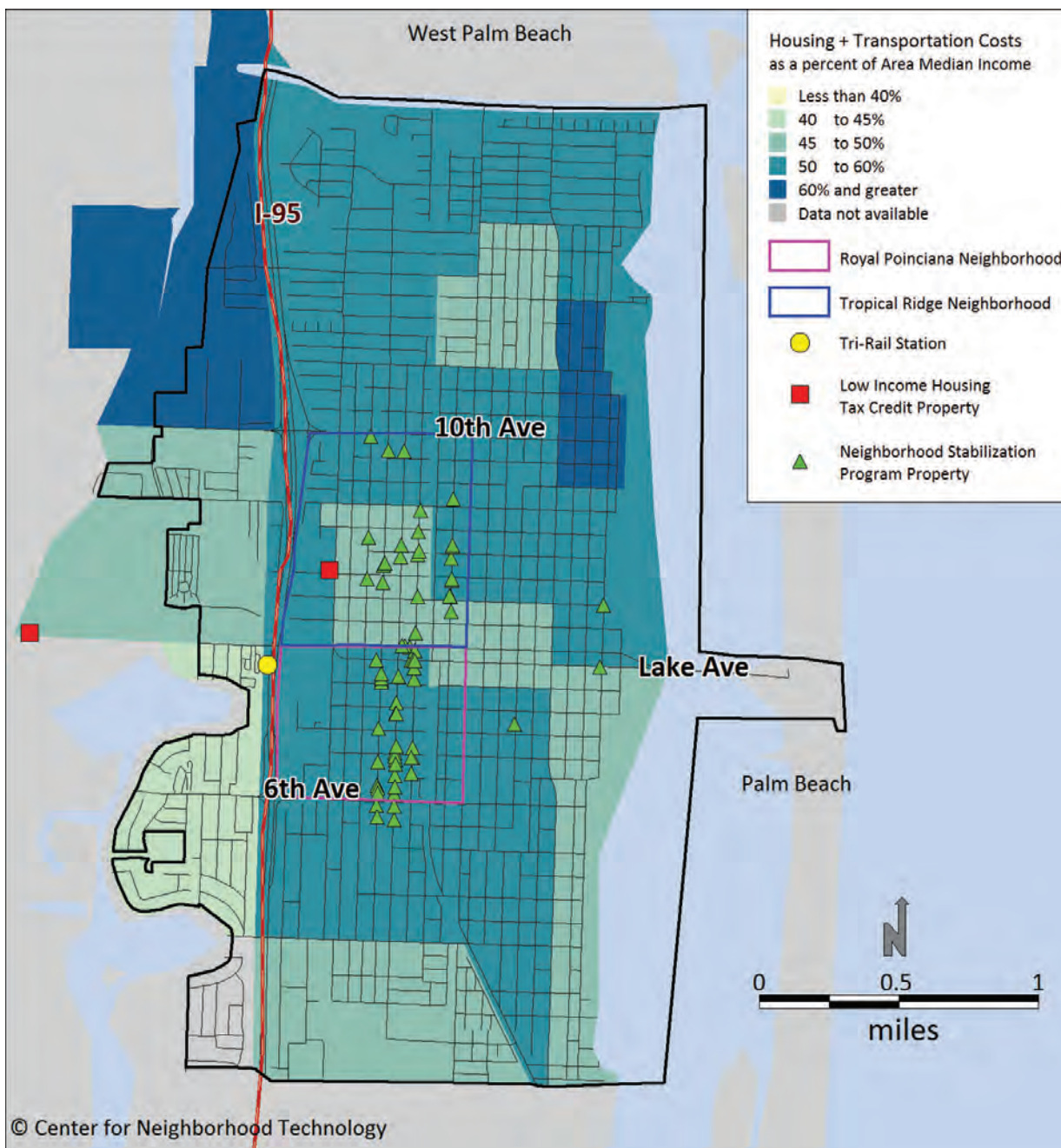
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## Lake Worth, Florida

*Lake Worth is a small city in Palm Beach County that has implemented a variety of bicycle and pedestrian projects to better serve the residents of some of its poorest neighborhoods and support the local tax base, while also focusing on improving the quality of its affordable housing stock.*

Lake Worth is a city of about 35,000 people and 7 square miles, located on the Atlantic coast in Palm Beach County. Surrounded by some of the wealthiest communities in the state of Florida, Lake Worth's affordable housing stock has attracted a diverse

population, including many artists and musicians, immigrants, and low-income households. The city's historic downtown and bungalows, walkable neighborhoods, beachfront, and 16 neighborhood associations contribute to an amenity- and community-



**Figure 16. Combined housing and transportation costs as a percent of area median income in Lake Worth. Average housing and transportation costs amount to between 50 and 60 percent of area median income in most neighborhoods.**

Image source: H+T Index, 2005-09



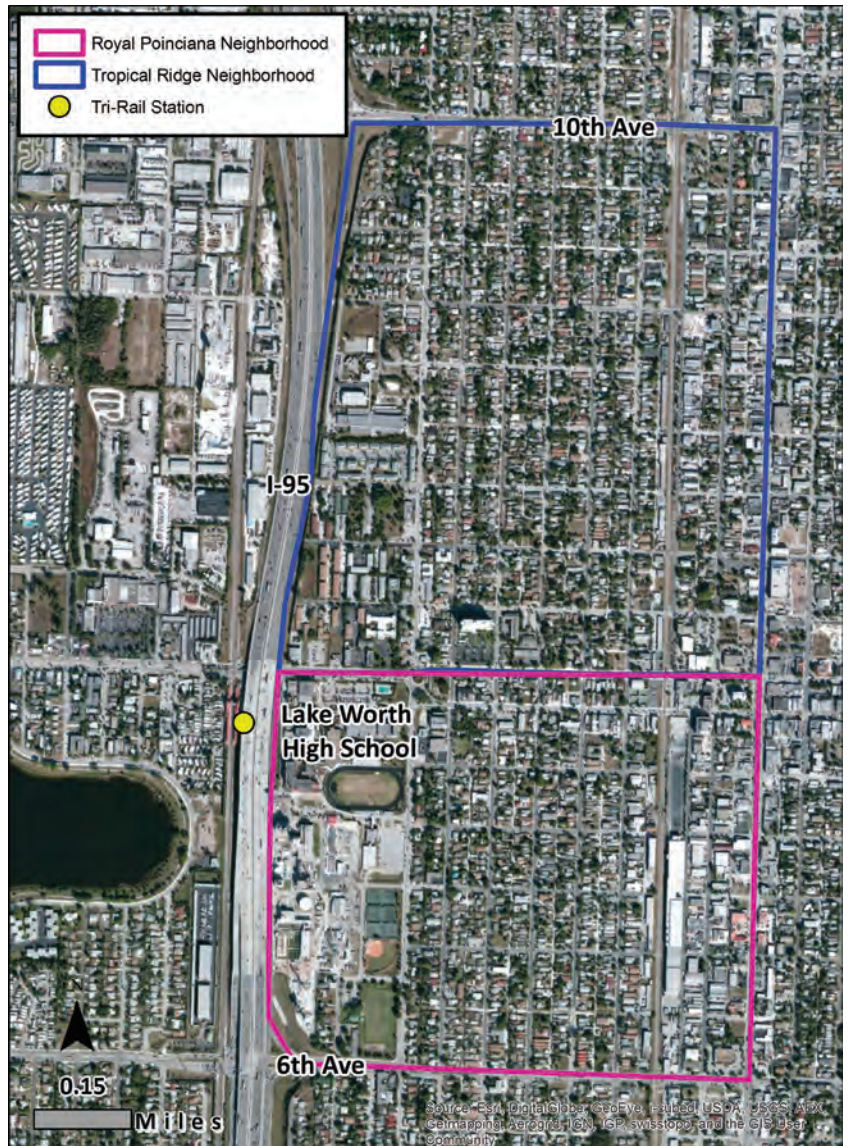
rich lifestyle for residents. Lake Worth has one train station that is part of the regional commuter rail system, Tri-Rail, which provides service to Ft. Lauderdale and the Miami Airport, among other destinations.

During the last decade, Lake Worth's population has stagnated, remaining flat while the metropolitan region's population grew by 11 percent between 2000 and 2010. The city also has a low median income (\$37,288 compared with the regional median of \$55,988) and a high poverty rate (29 percent compared with less than 9 percent for the county as a whole). Nearly one-half of all households in Lake Worth rent rather than own their housing unit (compared with 35 percent in the region as a whole), and the city has experienced high rates of home foreclosure, vacant housing units, and building code violations. At the same time, municipal revenues declined significantly during the recession, resulting in a reduced staff size and decreased funding for capital improvements.

### **Focus Neighborhoods: Tropical Ridge and Royal Poinciana**

The Tropical Ridge and Royal Poinciana neighborhoods are among the lowest income residential neighborhoods in Lake Worth, and are included in the city's Community Redevelopment Area.<sup>36</sup> The neighborhoods provide many residents with affordable, market-rate housing and with many

<sup>36</sup> Under Florida state law, communities can establish Community Redevelopment Agencies (CRAs) to address conditions such as substandard or inadequate structures, a shortage of affordable housing, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient roadways, and inadequate parking within designated Community Redevelopment Areas. CRAs have the power to collect tax increment financing, or TIF, dollars (that is, increases in property tax revenues over a frozen base year amount) and use those funds to make improvements within Community Redevelopment Areas.



**Figure 17. The Tropical Ridge and Royal Poinciana neighborhoods in Lake Worth. Improved sidewalks and bicycle lanes will help residents in Royal Poinciana and Tropical Ridge take advantage of the street grid to walk to destinations like Lake Worth High School, businesses along Lake and Lucerne Avenues, and the Tri-Rail station.**

Image source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

transportation options, including access to the city's Tri-Rail station and several local and regional bus lines. The average household exceeds three members in Tropical Ridge and four members in Royal Poinciana. Nearly 25 percent of Tropical Ridge residents and 19 percent of Royal Poinciana residents are less than the age of 18. The prevalence of large households with children makes local destinations such as schools





**Figure 18. Plans conducted in 2001 and 2005 found that broken, impassable, and missing sidewalks in the Tropical Ridge and Royal Poinciana neighborhoods were contributing to declining property values and eroding Lake Worth’s tax base.**

Image source: Lake Worth Community Redevelopment Agency, 2007

and parks a particularly important consideration in neighborhood transportation planning. Tropical Ridge is also home to at least one independent living community for seniors, Lake Worth Towers. Many of the senior residents do not drive, and are highly dependent on the local bus system and county paratransit service, which provides door-to-door service for disabled residents, seniors, and visitors.

In plans conducted in 2001 and 2005,<sup>37</sup> the Lake Worth Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) identified severe infrastructure deficiencies, including deteriorating sidewalks, lack of street lighting, and an incomplete roadway network, as among the neighborhood’s major challenges. Throughout the neighborhoods were numerous impassable and missing sidewalks, and a number of the east-west rights-of-way

<sup>37</sup> Lake Worth Community Redevelopment Agency, Neighborhood Enhancement Program, March 2005, [http://www.lakeworthcra.org/downloads/neighborhood\\_enhancement\\_report.pdf](http://www.lakeworthcra.org/downloads/neighborhood_enhancement_report.pdf); Lake Worth Community Redevelopment Agency, City of Lake Worth Redevelopment Plan, February 2001, [http://www.lakeworthcra.org/downloads/pdfs/plans\\_docs/REDEVELOPMENTPLAN.pdf](http://www.lakeworthcra.org/downloads/pdfs/plans_docs/REDEVELOPMENTPLAN.pdf).

were unpaved, overgrown, and littered with trash. The lack of sidewalk connectivity and many unimproved rights-of-way hampered residents’ ability to safely walk and bicycle, and presented a particular challenge for students trying to access Lake Worth High School. In addition, these infrastructure deficiencies—along with a disinvested housing stock, vacant housing units, and high rate of absentee ownership—were contributing to declining property values and eroding the city’s tax base. To improve conditions for residents, attract new private investment, and the property tax base, the CRA and city of Lake Worth have focused on improving pedestrian and bicycling connectivity, and on upgrading the quality of the local housing stock.

### ***Improving Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity***

Most of the city and CRA’s efforts to improve walking conditions have been focused on the Tropical Ridge neighborhood, which has one of the most active neighborhood associations in Lake Worth. For example, between 2006 and 2009, the CRA conducted two sidewalk demonstration programs in Tropical Ridge to add sidewalks where none existed,



**Figure 19. The city of Lake Worth and the Community Redevelopment Agency recently completed 8 miles of new or restriped bicycle lanes, and adopted a policy to include bicycle infrastructure, whenever a street is repaved.**

Image source: Lake Worth Community Redevelopment Agency, 2013

and replaced those that were impassable. The program was paid for with CRA tax-increment financing, and addressed most of the broken and missing sidewalks in Tropical Ridge. The sidewalk challenges in Royal Poinciana—where residents historically have been less well organized and only recently established a neighborhood association—remain, however.

The city and CRA have worked to improve the bicycle network throughout Lake Worth, beginning with a Bicycle Master Plan created in 2009. Conducted with significant public involvement, the plan identified where bicycle lanes needed to be added or improved throughout Lake Worth. The city and CRA recently completed the first phase of improvements, consisting of 8 miles of new or restriped lanes, costing slightly less than \$100,000. Several lanes run through the Tropical Ridge and Royal Poinciana neighborhoods, providing improved connections to downtown, and are proving to be popular with the community. The city has also adopted a policy to include bicycle infrastructure whenever a street is repaved.

Lake Worth most recently turned its attention to addressing the unimproved rights-of-way. The city and CRA were recently awarded a \$750,000 grant from the Palm Beach Metropolitan Planning Organization to create a greenway for pedestrians and bicyclists on one of the unimproved rights-of-way in Royal Poinciana. Palm Beach County School District partnered in the grant proposal. The greenway will provide a safer route to Lake Worth High School; many students currently walk along 6th Avenue South, one of the city's busiest arterials, to get to school. The city is also working on a citywide master plan to identify all the unimproved rights-of-way in Lake Worth.

### **Upgrading the Local Housing Stock**

In addition to infrastructure deficiencies, the CRA's 2001 and 2005 plans identified a disinvested and deteriorating housing stock as a major challenge facing the Tropical Ridge and Royal Poinciana neighborhoods.



**Figure 20. Before (top) and after (bottom) photos of one of the Lake Worth CRA's Neighborhood Stabilization Program projects.**

Image source: Lake Worth Community Redevelopment Agency, 2011 and 2012

The CRA's plans found that while housing in these neighborhoods was affordable, many units were poorly maintained or vacant, negatively affecting the quality of the neighborhood overall. These problems only intensified during the national housing crisis that



began in 2008. Tropical Ridge and Royal Poinciana experienced some of the highest foreclosure rates in the city and also had high rates of building code violations.

In response to these challenges, the Lake Worth CRA worked with 20 community-based organizations and local businesses to obtain a \$23 million federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) grant in 2010 to purchase, rehabilitate, and demolish foreclosed homes. The target area for the NSP grant included most of the Tropical Ridge and Royal Poinciana neighborhoods and parts of downtown Lake Worth. Over the course of 3 years, the CRA invested the grant funding in more than 100 foreclosed and abandoned properties, providing homeownership opportunities for families and injecting new life into the neighborhoods. Two local housing providers, Habitat for Humanity and Adopt-a-Family of the Palm Beaches, completed many of the renovations. The CRA and its partners have received awards for their successful deployment of the funds, including a first place City Cultural Diversity award from the National League of Cities for programs that encourage citizen involvement and promote diversity. At the same time, the city of Lake Worth has focused on improving code compliance, including adopting a new code-compliance process and adding four new code-compliance staff members since 2010. In addition to contributing to an improved housing stock and quality of life, these efforts are demonstrating to residents and potential funding partners that the city has the capacity to tackle major challenges and use grant funding efficiently and effectively.

### Key Challenges

- ***Lake Worth has limited staff capacity and financial resources.*** The city's capacity constraints can make planning and implementing housing and transportation programs more challenging.

- ***Bicycle and pedestrian access to schools, parks, and amenities affects quality of life and transportation costs.*** There are many large households with children in Royal Poinciana and Tropical Ridge. The ability to walk or bike to a local school or park can significantly impact the cost of transportation for these households.
- ***Poor-quality sidewalks and other transportation infrastructure, as well as disinvested housing, can contribute to falling property values and a declining tax base.*** Lake Worth decided to focus on improving pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and upgrading its housing stock after the CRA concluded that infrastructure deficiencies and a dilapidated housing stock were negatively affecting the quality of life and the tax base in the Tropical Ridge and Royal Poinciana neighborhoods.

### Keys to Success

- ***Citizen engagement can help focus attention on local needs.*** Although both Tropical Ridge and Royal Poinciana both have significant infrastructure needs, Tropical Ridge has received more attention from the city and public investments, including the sidewalk demonstration programs and fitness park. This attention is in part due to Tropical Ridge's active residents, who have formed one of the city's most active neighborhood associations and lobbied the city for improvements. Royal Poinciana has only recently formed a neighborhood association.
- ***Small and mid-sized cities can expand their capacity by building partnerships to help fund and implement improvements.*** Partnerships—between the city and CRA and with the MPO, school district, and community organizations—have been critical to Lake Worth's success, both in raising funding and in implementing housing and transportation projects. These partnerships, however, have been formed



largely on an ad hoc basis in Lake Worth, with partners coming together around specific projects. The city and CRA are working to meet more regularly with the school district, county, MPO, and other organizations in an attempt to establish ongoing relationships and expand Lake Worth's access to the region's resources.

- ***Relatively low-cost investments can make a significant difference in improving community connectivity and health.*** Lake Worth's new bicycle lanes, for example, cost slightly less than \$100,000 and are heavily used by the community.

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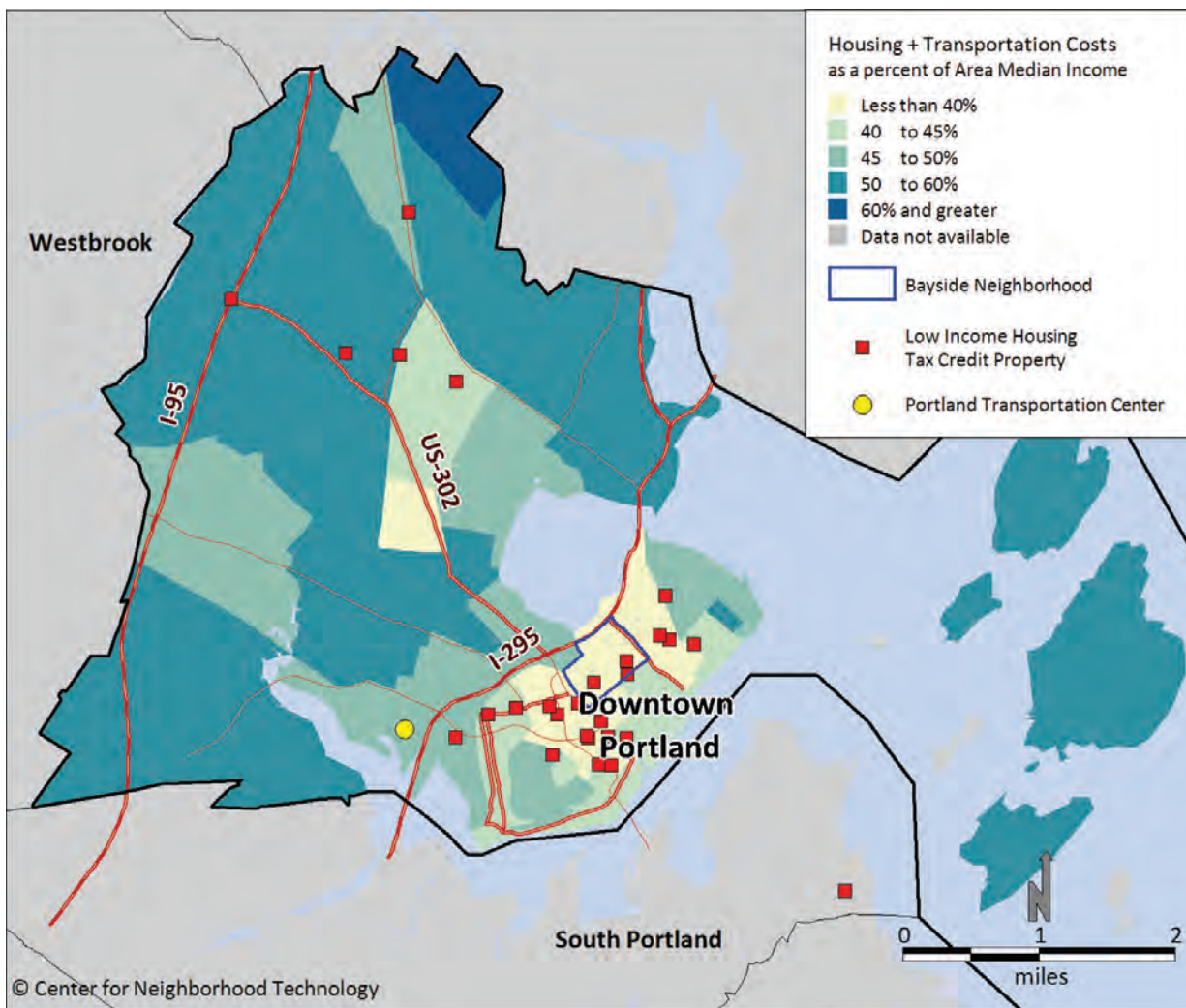
## Portland, Maine

**The Bayside neighborhood in Portland, Maine, is a former industrial area that is undergoing a transformation into an urban gateway with significant mixed-income residential and office development. The neighborhood provides excellent pedestrian access to employment and services, but institutional and financial barriers pose a barrier to coordination between new housing development and transit.**

Portland is the largest city in Maine and, with roughly 66,200 people, accounts for approximately one-third of the state’s population. Transportation options and the urban environment vary significantly across different parts of the city. These differences have led to wide variation in the combined cost of housing and transportation in different neighborhoods (Figure 21). The peninsula section of the city—located on the east side of I-295—is the historic core of Portland, and remains a compact, walkable place that includes the downtown employment center and many other

destinations that can be reached by foot. The peninsula is also served by two local bus providers, a commuter bus service, a regional Amtrak line that provides service to Boston, a ferry service, and a paratransit provider. Several private shuttles also operate in the district. As a result of these land use patterns and transportation options, most of the peninsula has relatively low housing and transportation costs (Figure 21).

West of I-295, Portland’s neighborhoods tend to be more auto-oriented, with fewer transit options.



**Figure 21. Combined housing and transportation costs as a percent of area median income in Portland. Differences in the built environment, from the configuration of streets to the compactness of development, have led to wide variation in the combined cost of housing and transportation across the city.**

Image source: H+T Index, 2005-09

Household densities are lower, and jobs are spread farther apart. Portland's bus system is designed in a "hub-and-spoke" configuration, with most lines running into the peninsula. As a result, residents may face challenges trying to access jobs located outside the peninsula. Moreover, the multiple transit agencies that operate within Portland each set their own schedules and fares, so making connections between services for cross-town trips can be difficult.

In addition to creating challenges for riders, the lack of a single, unified transit authority often makes it difficult to coordinate new housing development with public transportation service. Furthermore, a constitutional barrier in Maine prevents state transportation funds from being used for anything other than highways, so the burden of paying for transit service falls to the municipalities. These challenges are discussed in greater detail below.

### ***Focus Neighborhood: Bayside***

The Bayside neighborhood is located on Portland's peninsula, immediately adjacent to downtown. Bayside is a historically industrial district that had experienced significant disinvestment by the late 1990s. The average median household income in 2011 was \$21,500, considerably lower than that of the citywide median of \$45,150. Prompted by the large number of vacant, underused, and contaminated properties, the city of Portland began an extensive planning process that resulted in a plan adopted in 2000, known as A New Vision for Bayside. The plan envisioned the district as a walkable, "attractive urban gateway featuring a



**Figure 22. Portland's peninsula is served by two local bus providers, a commuter bus service, a regional Amtrak line that provides service to Boston, a ferry service, a paratransit provider, and several private shuttles.**

Image source: Alta Planning + Design, 2013

mix of uses, compact and intensive development as an extension of the downtown." A New Vision also planned for the area to become a transit-oriented district, with new development focused around shuttle and local bus service, which would connect the neighborhood to Amtrak and regional bus stops located across I-295 at the Portland Transportation Center. Since adoption of the plan, the city has spent nearly \$8 million and leveraged another \$14.5 in federal grants to acquire land, build streets and trails, and clean up contaminated sites.<sup>38</sup> Bayside has also experienced tremendous office and residential development, including the upcoming midtown development project, a large mixed-use project with 14-story towers that will be among the tallest in Portland.

<sup>38</sup> Seth Koenig, "Portland's Bayside Renaissance: \$8 Million in City Investments Triggers Nearly \$140 Million in Private Development," The Bangor Daily News, February 17, 2013, <http://bangordailynews.com/slideshow/portlands-bayside-renaissance-8-million-in-city-investments-triggers-nearly-140-million-in-private-development/>.

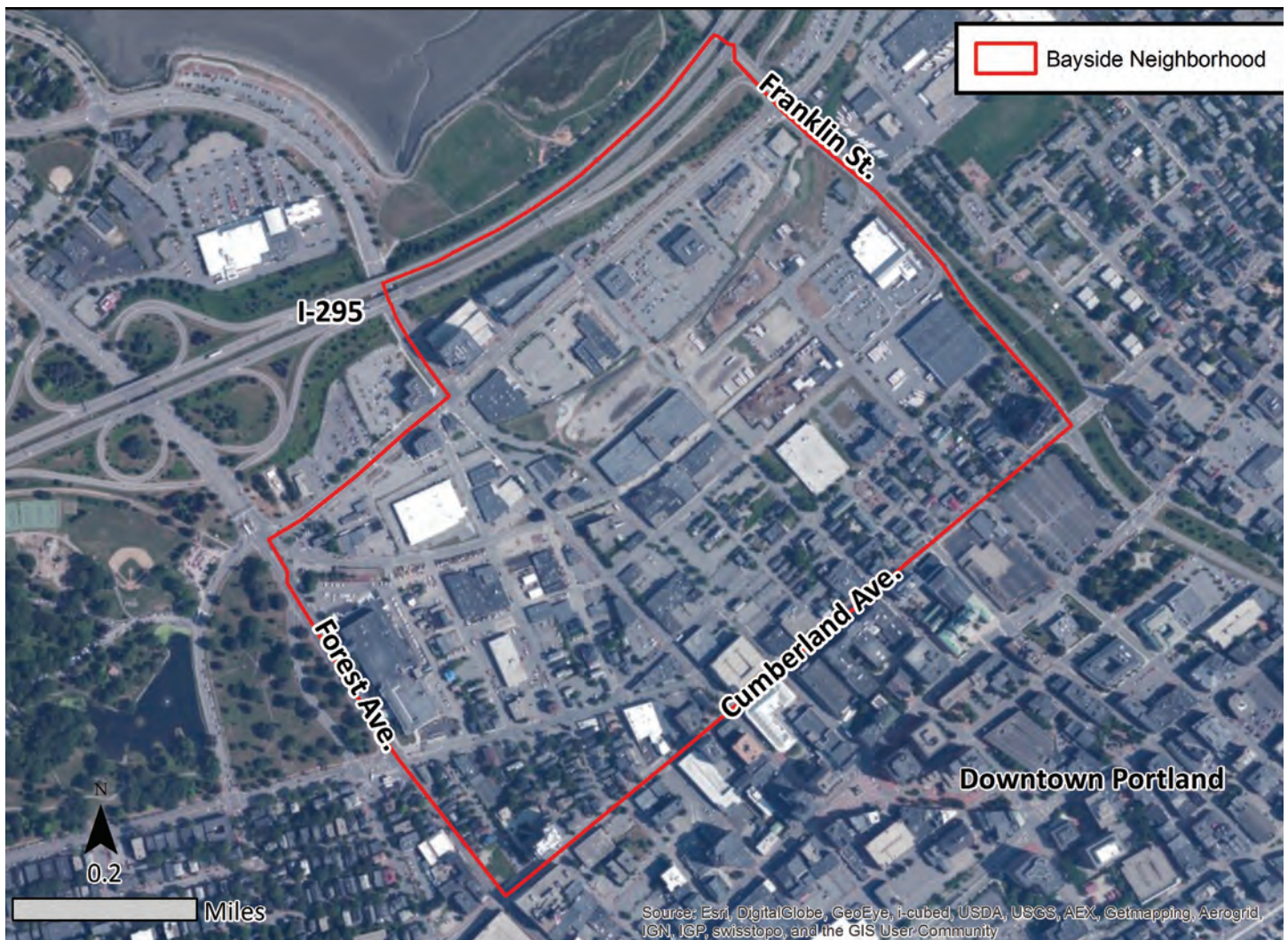


The new market-rate development that has occurred in Bayside has also been accompanied by affordable housing development. In *A New Vision for Bayside*, the city of Portland called for a “diversity of dwelling types [to] enable citizens from a wide range of economic levels, age groups, and life circumstances to live in Bayside.” Out of the 24 Low-Income Housing Tax Credit properties in Portland, 20 are located in neighborhoods to the west and south of I-295 (Figure 21). Affordable housing developers have focused development in and around Bayside to take advantage of proximity and access to downtown. For example, Avesta Housing’s Pearl Place affordable housing

development boasts that 43 percent of its residents can walk to work.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, Bayside is highly walkable, with relatively high densities (an average of 15 households per acre in Bayside, compared with 4.5 in Portland as a whole) and small block sizes (the average block size is 3 acres in Bayside, compared with 12.6 to the citywide average). One-third of Bayside residents walk to work, compared with 11 percent of all workers who live in the city of Portland.

<sup>39</sup> Avesta Housing, “Pearl Place,” 2010, <http://www.avestahousing.org/property-development/landmark-projects/pearl-place>.



**Figure 23. The Bayside neighborhood in Portland. From West Bayside, residents can walk to jobs in downtown Portland or to amenities in surrounding neighborhoods.**

Image source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community



In addition to its proximity to downtown, Bayside itself has significant employment and community services and amenities that are easily accessible to residents. Recognizing the importance of pedestrian and bicycle access, the city is focused on balancing motorized vehicle and nonmotorized transportation. The Bayside trail, for example, is a 1-mile, flat, paved urban trail that connects downtown to the Bayside community for easy walking and biking. While the neighborhood's bicycle lanes are still underdeveloped, bicycling is reportedly on the rise in Bayside, with residents of all demographics starting to embrace this mode of transportation. In addition, Portland recently received a Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities technical assistance award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, focused on planning bike-share programs, an indication that bicycling remains a potential growth area.

Although the city has made significant progress in providing good pedestrian and bicycling connections for Bayside residents, the vision of Bayside as a transit-oriented district has been more challenging to implement. Without a regional or citywide transit authority or other coordinating body, housing in Bayside is being developed without much consideration for bus routes or other transit service. In the future, bus service may need to be expanded or adjusted to meet the transportation needs of new development. Expanding bus service to serve a new development may be difficult, however, because transit funding in Portland depends highly on the ups and downs of the annual municipal budget.



**Figure 24. Portland's Bayside Trail**

Image source: Alta Planning + Design, 2013

### Key Challenges

- ***Institutional barriers, such as operational and financing structures, can be a major challenge for integrating affordable housing and transportation.*** The lack of a unified transit authority in the Portland area limits the opportunity for coordination between new housing development and transit service, so little attention is being paid to the transit options that might serve new development. In addition, the lack of a state funding source for transit has shifted the burden of expanding bus service to the municipality, so any plans to increase transit service will depend on fluctuations in the local annual budget.

### Keys to Success

- ***By targeting new development to established neighborhoods with strong pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections, cities can build on their existing assets.*** By targeting the Bayside neighborhood for new, higher intensity, market-rate and affordable development in its land use

plans, the city of Portland is taking advantage of the neighborhood's proximity to downtown and the existing concentration of community services and amenities. In addition, by bringing new residents to the neighborhood, the new higher intensity development will help support additional retail and services over time, further enhancing the neighborhood's walkability.

- ***Providing housing for a mix of income groups can contribute to the vitality and success of a neighborhood.*** Affordable housing is a critical component of Bayside's transformation from a disinvested industrial neighborhood into a vibrant, mixed-use district.
- ***Market-rate and affordable housing developers increasingly are seeing the value of locating housing in connected communities.*** Developers in Portland have responded to the opportunity to construct affordable housing developments in walkable areas with easy access to the city's downtown area.

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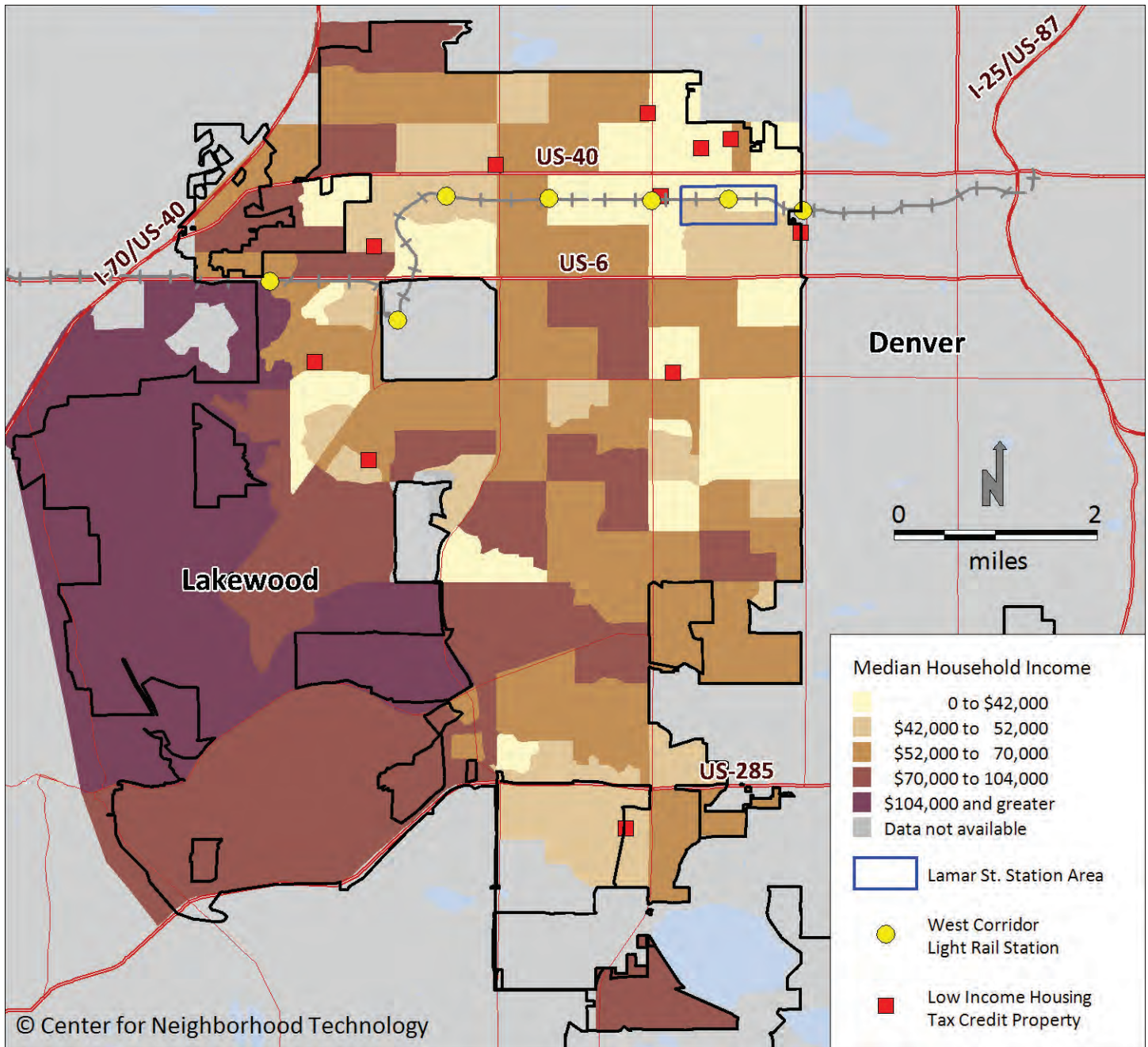
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## Lakewood, Colorado

*Lakewood, a Denver suburb, is being transformed by the recently opened West Rail Line that runs through a number of the city's neighborhoods. The introduction of light rail has led to housing development in the community, but further investments in mobility and other improvements are needed.*

Lakewood is a suburban community located immediately west of Denver, with a population of

about 143,000. The city sits along the West Rail Line, which was the first phase of the Regional



**Figure 25. Median household income in Lakewood. Median income in Lakewood lags that of the Denver region, with incomes lowest in neighborhoods near its border with the city of Denver.**

Image source: H+T Index, 2005-09



### Chapter III. Housing and Transportation Case Studies

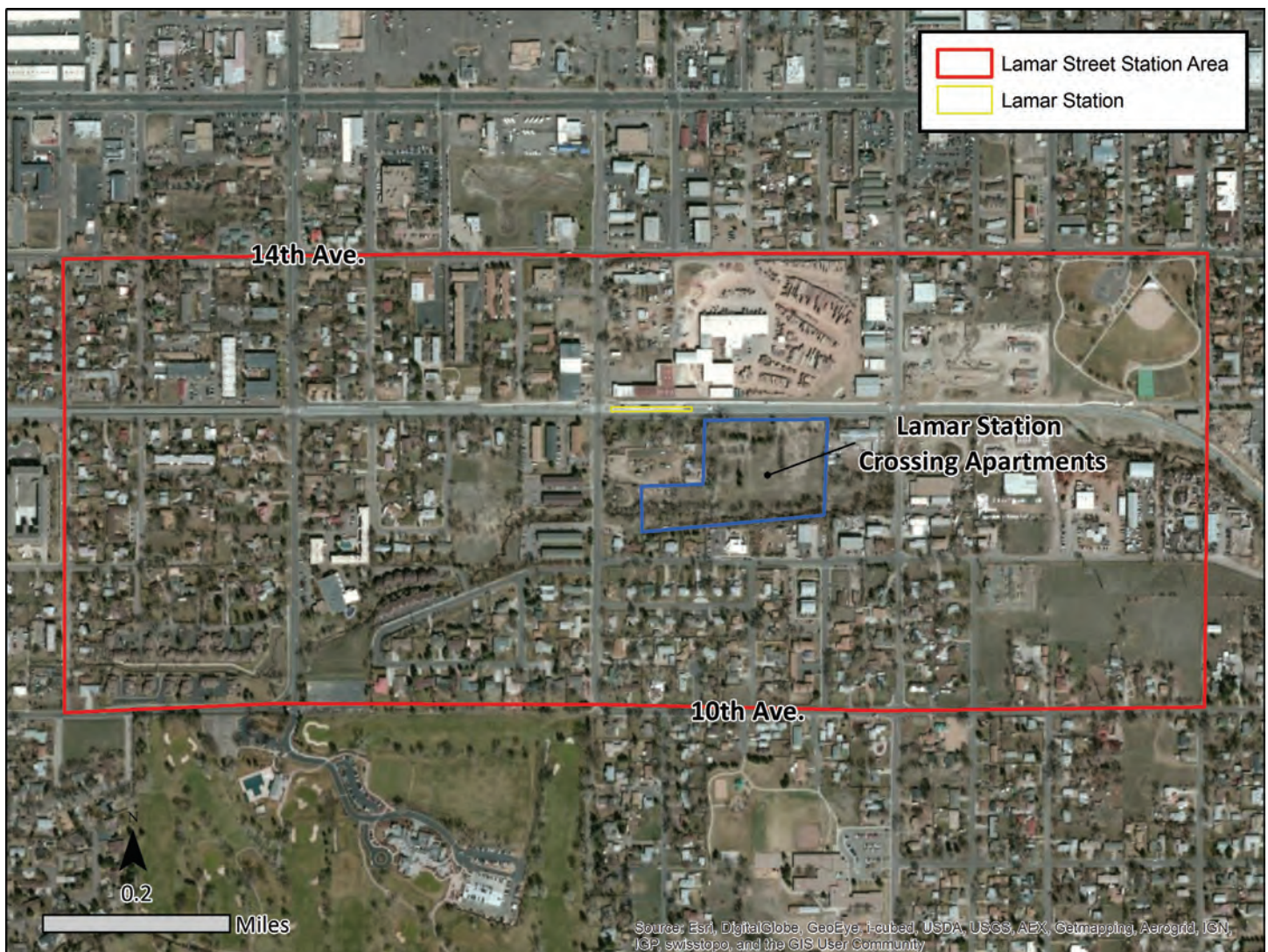
Transportation District of Denver's (RTD) FasTracks Program to be completed. The RTD FasTracks program is a comprehensive transit expansion plan to build 122 miles of new commuter rail and light rail and other transit services throughout RTD's eight-county district.<sup>40</sup>

The West Rail Line, a light-rail transit corridor, opened in 2013. The light-rail line runs from downtown

<sup>40</sup> FasTracks Regional Transportation District of Denver (RTD), Denver, Colorado, <http://www.rtd-fastracks.com>.

Denver, through Lakewood, and terminates at the Jefferson County Government Center in the city of Golden, linking a number of residential neighborhoods and employment centers along the way. The new West Rail Line has presented an opportunity for investment in housing and transportation connections along the corridor.

In an effort to ensure that the investments along the corridor resulted in equitable transit-oriented development (TOD), the cities of Denver and



**Figure 26. The Lamar Street Station Area in Lakewood. The environment around Lamar Station is suburban/semirural in character. Sidewalks, a greater number of intersections, and more compact, mixed-use development will all make it easier for residents to take transit to work and walk around the neighborhood to meet daily needs.**

Image source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community



Lakewood and their respective housing authorities—the Denver Housing Authority and Metro West Housing Solutions (MWHs)—formed the West Corridor Working Group. The West Corridor Working Group was a multijurisdictional partnership of public and private agencies, tasked with creating a TOD implementation strategy for the corridor to better leverage resources and achieve mutually supportive objectives for TOD in the West Corridor. The collaboration is now being formalized into the West Line Corridor Collaborative, a nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the neighborhoods along the West Rail Line by attracting investment and supporting livable communities through advocacy and collaboration.<sup>41</sup>

### **Focus Neighborhood: Lamar Street Station Area**

The Lamar Street Station Area is located in the Two Creeks area of Lakewood and lies directly along the West Rail Line. It is a largely residential area populated by mostly low-income renters and stands to benefit greatly from the incoming investment being spurred by the light rail. The Lamar light-rail station is a walkup station with no parking facilities, intended to encourage different modes of transit other than driving. Approximately 3,400 people live and 2,500 people work within one-half mile of the station.<sup>42</sup> The city of Lakewood prepared a Lamar Street Station Area Plan in 2010. The Station Area Plan's goals include creating strong connections by bike, rail, foot, and bus and encouraging a diversity of housing options for all income levels.

MWHs, the nonprofit housing authority in Lakewood, is currently building Lamar Station Crossing Apartments, a multifamily, mixed-income housing property located only 400 feet from the Lamar Street station of the West Line light-rail corridor. The location for the housing project was selected because of its

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.westlinecorridor.org/>

<sup>42</sup> City of Lakewood, Lamar Street Station Area Plan, March 2010.



**Figure 27. Lamar Station Crossing Apartments are located across the street from where the light-rail stops (top), but there are no sidewalks in front of the apartments (middle), and reaching the station requires walking along a narrow street with no sidewalks on either side (bottom).**

Image sources: Metro West Housing Solutions, Reconnecting America and Strategic Economics, 2012 and 2013

proximity to the light rail, and the project received Low-Income Housing Tax Credits in part because it is located within one-fourth of a mile of the station. With its proximity to the light rail, Lamar Station Crossing Apartments should be only 15 minutes from downtown Denver and from other employment centers and education campuses to the east and west.

Poor pedestrian connectivity to the light-rail station, however, is a significant challenge. From a historical perspective, Lakewood considers itself a rural community. Sidewalks have only recently become a priority, and their installation still requires permission from the neighborhood property owners where the sidewalks are needed. Although the Lamar Station Crossing Apartments project is within walking distance of the station, it is currently without any existing sidewalks, and access to the station is difficult. The area has bus service, which could serve as another alternative, but in light of the station's location of only 400 feet away, access to the light rail would be preferable. The housing developer is working to get a sidewalk built on the property between the apartments and the station, but it may take up to 4 years. It is expected that the light rail itself will spur more development in the area, so other development projects may contribute to the costs for the sidewalk.

### Key Challenges

- ***Light rail alone is not sufficient to make a location accessible to households without cars.*** Even after rail arrives in a community, sidewalks and other mobility improvements may still be required to make a location accessible without cars.

### Keys to Success

- ***Coordinating land use and transportation planning is key to improving accessibility.*** Suburban neighborhoods that once completely relied on the automobile are rethinking the importance of transit, sidewalks, and other mobility

improvements. The built environment, however, is just as important as mobility improvements. New, more compact development can increase the services and stores within walking distance of a neighborhood. Sidewalks and other pedestrian improvements make it easier to walk to those destinations and to other transit options.

- ***Targeting existing resources, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, to transit-served places can be an effective way of promoting affordable housing development in those locations.*** MWHWS's affordable housing development in Lamar is a direct result of tax credits aimed at promoting development in locations where residents can easily take advantage of public transportation.

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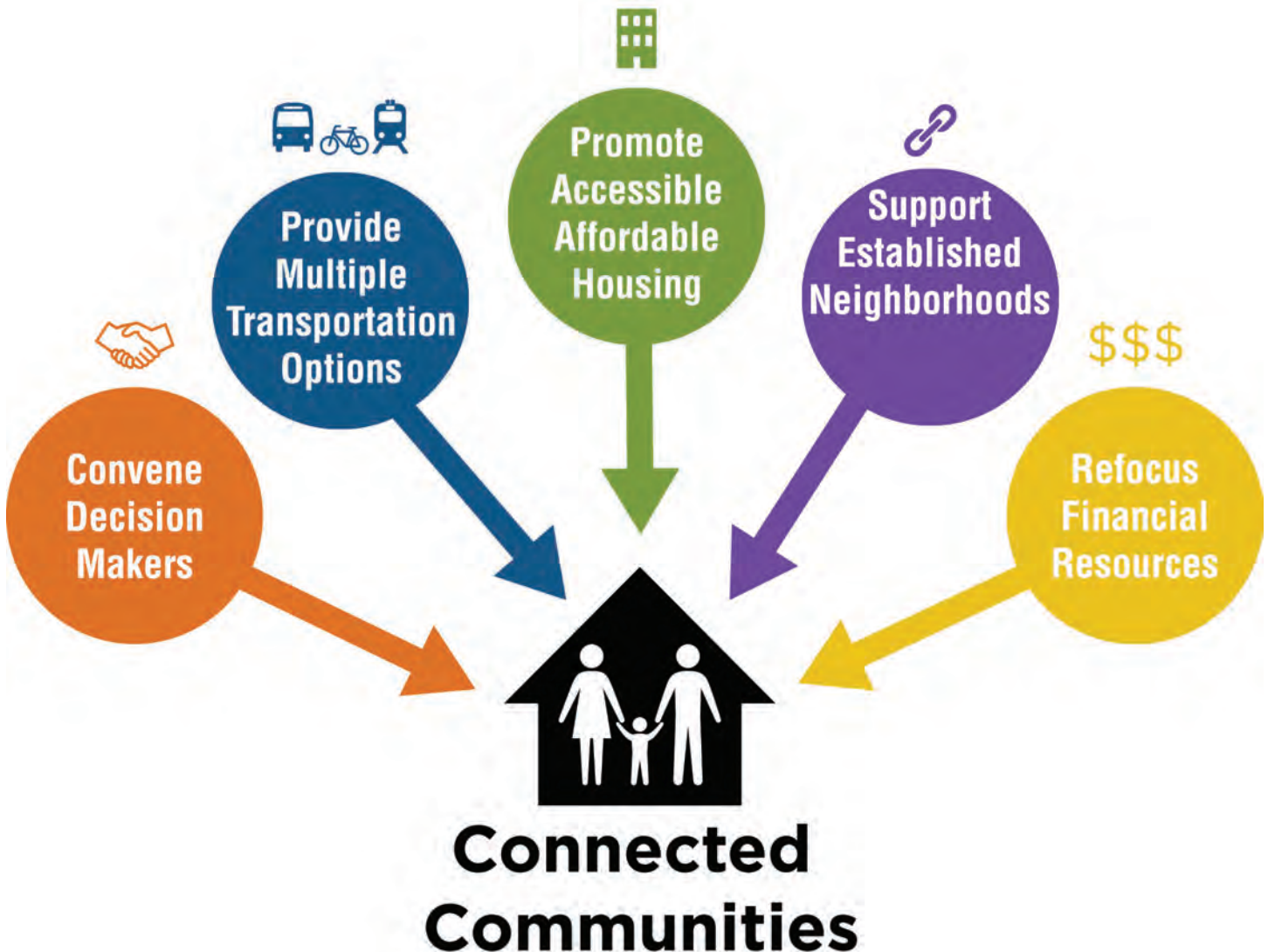
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## Chapter IV. Implementation: What is Next?

This chapter presents a series of strategies that cities or other local governments (for example, towns, villages, unincorporated areas, counties) can use to improve the connections between affordable housing and jobs, schools, shopping, services, and other essential destinations in their communities. The strategies provide clear, actionable steps that small and mid-sized cities can take to create more connected communities. Given the limited staff capacity and financial resources of many small and mid-sized cities, the strategies emphasize looking for regional, state, and federal partnerships that can help expand local capacity, and making incremental changes that can add up to significant improvements in the mobility of

low- and moderate-income residents. The strategies also encourage cities to consider the needs of residents of both market-rate and subsidized affordable housing, and to include providers of all types of transit—including paratransit, shuttles, local bus, regional bus, and rail services, whether operated by public transit agencies, other community service providers, or local business groups—in the planning process. While the strategies discussed below are intended to be applicable to the specific characteristics of small and mid-sized cities, not every action will be appropriate in every community. Many strategies also apply to larger cities seeking to better integrate transportation systems with housing and services.





## Strategies are organized within the following five overarching goals:

**G. Convene decisionmakers.** A multitude of different departments and organizations play a role in providing affordable housing and transportation services in any community. By bringing these decisionmakers together, cities can expand local capacity and help ensure that local, regional, state, federal, and community partners are all working toward the common goal of improving the quality of public services and the efficiency of public spending.

**H. Provide multiple transportation options.**

Providing a variety of transportation options designed to meet local transportation needs is critical to ensuring that low- and moderate-income residents can access employment, schools, parks, and other daily destinations. Both people and cities benefit when a car is not required for every trip.

**I. Promote accessible affordable housing in connected communities.** The location and design of affordable housing determine the ease with which residents can access daily needs. Many cities already have existing walkable neighborhoods with strong connections to jobs and services. By prioritizing the preservation of existing affordable housing and making it easier to develop new affordable housing in these areas, cities can build

on existing assets and help strengthen local neighborhoods.

**J. Support established neighborhoods.** In addition to quality transportation choices and affordable housing, residents must also have access to other key destinations and services such as medical care, jobs, a healthy environment, fresh food, and green space. Many cities already have established neighborhoods where most of these elements are in place; in other cities, more effort may be required to ensure that existing neighborhoods offer a full range of services and amenities. By focusing on enhancing established neighborhoods, cities can build on their existing assets, provide additional opportunities for existing residents, and improve the efficiency of municipal services.

**K. Refocus financial resources.** Focusing public dollars on critical needs and improving the alignment between housing and transportation investments helps to make optimal use of scarce financial resources.

The following sections discuss each goal in turn, and include specific strategies, actions, and tools for cities to consider.

### Goal A. Convene Decisionmakers

**Bring together the key agencies involved in transportation and housing planning, policy, and investments, and look for regional, state, federal, and community partners to help achieve local goals.**

Small and mid-sized cities cannot overcome housing and transportation challenges on their own. As the case studies in Chapter III illustrated, many small and mid-sized city governments have small staffs with limited time and capacity to take on major new projects—although a small staff size may also make it easier to convene all key decisionmakers in the room at the same time. In addition, cities do not have control over many aspects of the housing and transportation systems.

This is especially true of small and mid-sized cities, which are often particularly reliant on counties, transit agencies, state departments of transportation, and other independent agencies to provide local services and funding.

In most places, the city or other local government entity is responsible for building and maintaining streets, sidewalks, parks, and other local infrastructure.

Cities also influence where housing and other development occurs through land use planning and zoning. Most cities, however, have limited authority over key aspects of the local transportation system within their own jurisdictions. For example, bus providers and other transit agencies are usually operated as independent entities, often serving multiple cities of various sizes within a county or region. State departments of transportation (DOTs) control state routes and highways—which serve as Main Street in many small towns—and typically get the final say in whether a city can build sidewalks or bicycle routes along state-owned roads. In addition, local governments are rarely directly involved in building and maintaining housing. Rather, this function is performed by public housing authorities, nonprofit and private affordable housing developers, and the private market. States, including DOTs and other agencies, also allocate some federal funding to small cities that larger cities or MPOs in larger regions receive directly, such as Transportation Alternatives Program funding and Community Development Block Grants (see goal E for additional discussion of this issue).

The wide variety of decisionmakers involved in housing and transportation planning and policy can lead to inefficiencies and missed connections. Cities can ensure that internal city departments are working toward a common vision, however, and can play a key role in convening other decisionmakers around achieving local goals. The following strategies facilitate this type of collaboration:

- Align city departments around the shared goal of linking housing and transportation policy, planning, and investment decisions.
- Make housing and transportation integration “business as usual.”
- Convene community, local, state, regional, and federal partners.

The strategies discussed in this goal focus on improving existing processes and looking for opportunities to better align ongoing projects wherever possible. Nevertheless, while the strategies are intended to be doable with limited resources, implementation does require leadership, and will work best if a dedicated individual or group of individuals takes responsibility for convening decisionmakers and starting the conversation. Leadership could come from a mayor, city manager, city council member(s), and/or key staff members—or from you, the person reading this guidebook.

***Strategy 1. Align city departments around the shared goal of linking transportation and housing policy, planning, and investment decisions.***

- ***Identify key leaders and staff members who make decisions related to housing affordability and transportation connections.*** Within each city, many different departments are responsible for establishing policies, drafting plans, and making investment decisions that affect the quality and affordability of housing, and the ability of residents to access their daily needs. Planning department staff members influence where development occurs through land use plans and zoning policies; public works sets priorities for improving streets, sidewalks, and other types of public infrastructure; parks and recreation staff build and maintain open space; and finance department staff coordinate the municipal budget, often including the budget for capital improvements. Some cities also have dedicated housing, transportation, economic development, and other staff members who are involved directly or indirectly in determining where public investments are made and where housing, jobs, retail, services, and other land uses are located within a community. There may also be key partners from other public agencies, such as a local transit provider, that should be consulted regularly.

- ***Establish a process for coordinating activities among departments.*** In some communities, this could take the form of a formal working group that meets regularly to coordinate activities among different departments. Other cities may be able to build upon an existing process for reviewing investment decisions and development proposals for consistency with city policy. Depending on the city, the mayor or city manager may be in the best position to bring together different departments to ensure that they collaborate on decisions that affect housing and transportation. For cities that have already identified the coordination of housing and

### ***Los Angeles Transit Corridors Cabinet***

In 2012, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa formed a Transit Corridors Cabinet (TCC) comprising all key departments in the city, including housing, transportation, planning, building and safety, and public works.

The TCC is charged with ensuring that all departments work together to maximize the benefit of LA's transit system by creating, preserving, and enhancing "employment, economic development, affordable and workforce housing, and community services along transit." The TCC's work plan for the first two quarters of 2013 prioritized creating complete streets that accommodate all modes of travel, creating and preserving affordable housing near transit to maintain low transportation costs for those most dependent on transit, and encouraging mixed-use development.

Sources: City of Los Angeles, Press Release, November 26, 2012; Los Angeles Transit Corridors Cabinet, <http://www.losangelesworks.org/losangelestransitcorridorscabinet.cfm>.

transportation as a priority, the next step could be to assign a specific staff person to focus on coordinating activities among departments and implementing related projects.

- ***Establish metrics for measuring performance.*** Formal performance metrics can help ensure that departments are accountable and feel a shared sense of responsibility for success. For example, cities can establish goals and track progress around metrics such as mode share (the percentage of workers driving alone, carpooling, bicycling, or walking to work), miles of sidewalks and bike lanes available in the community, or number of affordable housing residents receiving bus passes or other transportation services.

### ***Strategy 2. Make housing and transportation integration "business as usual."***

- ***Establish a vision statement that articulates the importance of creating multimodal connections for all users.*** A clear, inspiring vision for how and why the city wants to create multiple transportation options and coordinate transportation with affordable housing can help guide future activities and mobilize support.
- ***Incorporate the goal of connecting affordable housing with multiple modes of transportation into appropriate city policies.*** The comprehensive plan, other land use planning activities, the Consolidated Plan,<sup>43</sup> and the capital improvement budgeting process all present opportunities to establish connected communities as a citywide priority.

<sup>43</sup> States and local jurisdictions that receive formula block grant funding from HUD (that is, from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the HOME Investment Partnership (HOME), the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs) are required to create Consolidated Plans that serve as a framework for identifying housing and community development priorities.





**Figure 28.** In November 2009, the state of Ohio and city of Cincinnati convened city departments, nonprofits, county and regional agencies, and real estate developers in Cincinnati to discuss land use and transit investment strategies to curb regional housing and transportation costs.

Image source: CNT, 2009

- ***Identify ongoing city projects and investments that can be better aligned.***

Look for opportunities to build momentum by coordinating planning efforts, public works investments, and park upgrades. For example, if the planning or community development department is working with a developer on a new affordable housing project, the public works department could consider targeting sidewalk, bicycle lane, or other transportation improvements to the same area to help improve connectivity.

- ***Consider additional projects and programs to create connected communities.*** Goals B through E identify a number of actions that cities can take to make affordable housing and low- and moderate-income neighborhoods more accessible by multiple modes of transportation.

### ***Coordinating Regional Housing, Transportation, and Planning in Grand Traverse County, Michigan***

In 2007, a group of community partners in northwestern Michigan—including the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, local colleges and universities, business groups, and charitable organizations—began a 3-year process to create a regional land use and transportation vision. The project culminated in 2009 with the release of “The Grand Vision,” which identified six guiding principles including a regional multimodal transportation and a diverse mix of regional housing choices with affordable options. This vision helped pave the way for Traverse City and Grand Traverse County to receive a HUD Community Challenge Planning Grant through the Partnership for Sustainable Communities in 2010. The city and county used those grant funds to prepare the following studies and plans:

- A countywide housing inventory and strategy.
- A new master plan for Grand Traverse County that identifies community values and strategies to enhance those values.
- A new corridor plan for the city of Traverse City that identifies revitalization as a priority for five major streets.

In 2011, the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments was awarded a HUD Regional Planning Grant, in part to develop an implementation framework for the Grand Vision.

See the Traverse City case study in Chapter III for more information.

**Strategy 3. Convene community, local, state, regional, and federal partners.**

- **Communicate to local, regional, and state partners the importance of providing multiple transportation options to affordable housing residents.** Bring the quality of life, economic, and fiscal benefits of creating a connected community to the attention of potential partners such as the transit agency, housing authority, metropolitan planning organization (MPO),<sup>44</sup> and state department of transportation. This guidebook can serve as a starting point for those discussions.
- **Identify decisionmaking points where coordination can occur.** For example, a city's comprehensive planning or capital improvement budgeting process can serve as opportunities to bring the transit agency, school district, community college districts, and other service providers into the local land use planning process. Cities should also look for opportunities to make their priorities known and build partnerships when other agencies

conduct planning processes—for example, when a transit agency is planning new routes, or during the MPO's regional transportation planning process.<sup>45</sup> As new partners come on board, look for opportunities to establish proactive, ongoing processes to coordinate decisionmaking. For example, the city and transit agency could establish a joint process for planning bus routes.

- **Facilitate improved communication between developers, housing advocates, and transit agencies, and encourage housing developers to notify the local transit agency before and during the planning stage of development.** Help build a working relationship that will ensure open lines of communication and collaboration when planning new affordable housing or new transit facilities. See Goals B and C for more information on specific planning activities that these groups can engage in together.

<sup>44</sup> Metropolitan planning organizations are federally mandated agencies charged with regional transportation planning and allocating federal transportation funding in urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or more.

<sup>45</sup> MPOs are required to conduct Regional Transportation Plans, which serve as the long-term blueprint for a region's transportation planning process, typically every 5 years.

**Communicating with Regional Partners in Lakewood, Colorado**

Lakewood, Colorado, is located west of Denver. In 2013, the West Rail Line opened, providing a new light-rail connection between Lakewood and downtown Denver. The West Rail Line presents an opportunity for investment in housing and transportation connections along the corridor. As the light-rail line was being planned, the cities of Denver and Lakewood and their respective housing authorities—the Denver Housing Authority and Metro West Housing Solutions (MWHs)—formed the West Corridor Working Group. The working group was tasked with creating a transit-oriented

development (TOD) implementation strategy for the corridor to better leverage resources and achieve mutually supportive objectives for TOD in the West Corridor. The collaboration is now being formalized into the West Line Corridor Collaborative, a non-profit organization that seeks to improve the neighborhoods along the West Rail Line by attracting investment and supporting livable communities through advocacy and collaboration.

See the Lakewood case study in Chapter III for more information.

- ***Engage low- and moderate-income households and community organizations in the discussion.*** Work with affordable housing residents and other low- and moderate-income households to understand the specific transportation challenges they face, whether

missing sidewalk connections to a school or bus stop, or inadequate transit service in a neighborhood. Local neighborhood associations, faith-based groups, and other community organizations may be able to help facilitate these conversations.

## Goal B. Provide Multiple Transportation Options

***Provide convenient, reliable, and affordable transportation options for affordable housing residents and other low- and moderate-income households to access jobs, schools, retail, services, and other key destinations.***

In many small and midsize communities, getting around is easy – as long as you own a car. However, as discussed in Chapter II, car ownership can be a financial burden that is difficult or impossible to sustain for many low-income households. Other residents may not have access to a car because they are too young, or have health challenges or other impairments that prevent them from driving. A well-connected, multimodal transportation network can help ensure that residents without a car can still get to work,

school, and other destinations for their daily needs. Improving the connectivity of the local transportation network also has benefits for the community as a whole, providing residents of all ages and abilities with the option of walking, bicycling, or taking transit in order to save money or improve their physical health.

As discussed in Chapters II and III, understanding a community’s location within its region – whether it is a regional center, supporting city, or bedroom

community (as defined in Chapter II)—can help decisionmakers think about the transportation connections that residents may need to reach job opportunities, community colleges, healthcare centers, senior centers, schools, childcare, or other essential destinations. The case studies in chapter III provide some examples. For instance, in Traverse City, Michigan, low-income residents who live at the periphery of the city struggle to get downtown and to other areas in the center of the city, where services and jobs are concentrated. In Gonzales, California, a bedroom community, low-income residents without cars need



**Figure 29.** The Emery-Go-Round, an employer-funded shuttle service in Emeryville, California, provides a “last mile” connection between the nearest regional Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station and housing, employers, and shopping in Emeryville. Small cities may be able to leverage their resources by working with business associations, hospitals, and other local organizations.

Image Source: Strategic Economics, 2010



better transportation alternatives to access employment, health care, and shopping located 15 miles away in Salinas, the regional center.

Other transportation connectivity needs may depend more on the land use context in a specific neighborhood than on the city's overall role in the region. Many cities of all types have a historic urban core and/or other neighborhoods where residents can easily walk or bicycle to shop for groceries, get to the park, and meet other daily needs. In these neighborhoods, integrating transportation and affordable housing to better meet residents' daily needs may involve fixing or filling in missing sidewalks,



### ***Pedestrian-Friendly Design Checklist***

When a city assesses a neighborhood's pedestrian environment, it should consider the following questions:

- Is it practical for residents to reach key destinations—schools, grocery stores, parks, bus stops, etc.—on foot?
- Are there sufficient crosswalks? Are they conveniently spaced at walkable intervals and located at intersections where pedestrians will want to cross?
- Do walk signals function and provide ample crossing time for seniors and disabled pedestrians?
- Are speed controls such as speed bumps and traffic circles in place?
- Do safety features such as ample street lighting exist along sidewalk corridors?

For examples of complete walking audit checklists, see <http://www.walkinginfo.org/problems/audits.cfm>.

installing safe pedestrian crossings on major arterial streets, or adding additional bike lanes to an existing bicycle and pedestrian network. On the other hand, residents living in neighborhoods with a more conventional suburban street network may live too far from the local grocery store, library, or elementary school to walk, or may find that the only route to walk or bicycle to their destination involves a major arterial without sidewalks. In these neighborhoods, providing local bus service or sidewalks in critical locations may be the key to providing residents with alternatives for accessing the goods and services they need on a day-to-day basis.

- Assess the degree to which the existing transportation network meets the needs of low- and moderate-income riders, and integrate multiple modes of transportation into local planning processes.
- Coordinate with transit providers to improve connections between affordable housing and jobs, services, and other destinations.
- Make incremental improvements to facilitate walking, bicycling, and taking transit throughout the city, prioritizing projects that improve connections for affordable housing and other low- and moderate-income residents.

***Strategy 1. Assess the degree to which the existing transportation network meets the needs of low- and moderate-income riders and integrate multiple modes of transportation into local planning processes.***

- ***At the city or regional level, inventory and/or map existing transit services to identify gaps in the system and ways to improve connectivity.*** Inventory, and if possible map, existing transit routes in relationship to affordable housing developments, low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, employment centers, schools, and other destinations. Include

not only local and regional bus and train lines, but also paratransit services and shuttles or vans operated by senior centers, colleges, business associations, or other private entities. Coordinate this effort with the existing conditions analysis discussed within goal C, strategy 1. Cities, transit agencies, and affordable housing developers can use this information to identify gaps in service (for example, key destinations that are inaccessible by transit), opportunities for improving connections among different routes or transit providers, and priority locations for targeting new bus routes or other improvements.

### ***Improving Bicycle and Pedestrian Connectivity in Lake Worth, Florida***

Lake Worth, Florida, is a small city in Palm Beach County with a low-income population, limited financial resources, and significant infrastructure challenges. Despite these challenges, the city has found incremental ways to improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity as funding becomes available. For example, the city is phasing in implementation of its Bicycle Master Plan by adopting a policy to include bicycle infrastructure whenever a street is repaved. Lake Worth has also found success in working with partners to plan, build, and fund projects. For example, Lake Worth was recently awarded a \$750,000 grant from the Palm Beach Metropolitan Planning Organization to create a greenway on an unimproved right-of-way. The new greenway will allow students to walk and bicycle to Lake Worth High School more safely. Palm Beach County School District partnered in the grant proposal.

See the Lake Worth case study in Chapter III for more information.

- ***At the neighborhood level, assess the conditions that pedestrians face and identify improvements to increase safety and walkability.*** Conduct a walking tour to evaluate pedestrian conditions using one of the many resources available on line (see “Pedestrian-Friendly Design Checklist” sidebar). Consider the needs of different potential users, including senior citizens, disabled pedestrians, and children. In general, sidewalks and trails should be well lit, wide enough to accommodate local foot traffic, and well maintained, with even pavements and no obstructions to pedestrian movement such as utility poles. Pay particular attention to the pedestrian connections to common destinations such as schools, grocery stores, parks, and bus stops.
- ***Integrate transit, pedestrian, and bicycle planning in a multimodal transportation plan.*** Many small and mid-sized cities plan for different modes of transportation in separate documents, or do little or no planning for bicycles, pedestrians, or transit. When these plans are separate or do not exist, cities may miss opportunities—for example, to improve bicycle and pedestrian conditions during routine roadway maintenance and repair. An integrated transportation plan should consider pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses, emergency vehicles, and automobiles.

### ***Strategy 2. Coordinate with transit providers to improve connections between affordable housing and jobs, services, and other destinations.***

- ***Coordinate with local transit agencies to develop routes and schedules that meet the needs of affordable housing residents and other low- and moderate-income households.*** In some cases, transit agencies may be able to make relatively minor adjustments to services—for example, changing the location



### **Elements of a Complete Street**

“Complete Streets are streets for everyone. . . . People of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across streets in a community, regardless of how they are traveling. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time, and make it safe for people to walk to and from train stations.”

National Complete Streets Coalition

Complete streets are streets that are designed and operated to be safe, accessible, and convenient for all users. Although complete street designs can vary significantly in response to local context, some common elements can include:

- Sidewalks
- Bicycle lanes
- Dedicated bus lanes
- Clearly marked, comfortable, universally accessible bus stops
- Frequent, safe crosswalks
- Accessible pedestrian signals, including user-activated flashing lights at un-signalized crossings
- Median islands, curb extensions, and other improvements to shorten crossing distances across intersections
- Traffic calming measures, such as narrowing roads, reducing speed limits, and installing roundabouts.

Source: National Complete Streets Coalition, <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/complete-streets-fundamentals>.

of a bus stop—that may make a big difference to residents. Other changes—such as adding a new bus route or changing schedules—are more significant, and may require more systematic change. By getting involved in the transit agency’s planning process, cities can ensure that their residents’ needs are considered.

- ***Work with transit providers to make bus and other transit easy to use for all riders.***

An effective transit system is one that operates at such high levels of service and convenience that people see it as a viable—and even preferable—alternative to the private automobile. Work with transit providers to ensure that service is frequent and timely; stops are clearly marked; paths to transportation facilities are well lit, safe, and universally accessible paths; facilities protect transit riders from the elements; and routes and schedules are easy to understand.

- ***Work with community organizations, regional and state agencies, and transit providers to fill gaps left by traditional bus or rail service.*** Different cities may need to fill different gaps. For example, in Gonzales, California (Chapter III), providing a formal vanpooling program has helped ensure that agricultural workers can get to work safely. Other communities may need expanded paratransit services to help disabled and elderly residents get around. In addition to transit agencies, business associations, hospitals, other community organizations, the regional metropolitan planning organization (MPO), and state departments of transportation may play a role in augmenting services.

***Strategy 3. Make incremental improvements to facilitate walking, bicycling, and taking transit throughout the city, prioritizing projects that improve connections for affordable housing and other low- and moderate-income residents.***





**Figure 30.** The ease and convenience of the “last mile” connection between a transit stop and the traveler’s origin and destination can play a critical role in whether bus or rail is a viable option.

Image source: Reconnecting America, 2013

- ***Start with low-cost, incremental improvements.*** For example, by painting new bike lanes or crosswalks, cities may be able to make a significant difference to community connectivity and health without incurring significant new expenditures.
- ***Take advantage of roadway maintenance, infrastructure projects, and other opportunities to improve or retrofit existing streets so that pedestrians and bicyclists can navigate more safely.*** Cities often have occasion to tear up a street to reach a sewer line or to redo the pavement as part of regular maintenance. These projects also represent opportunities to improve conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists. Some cities have adopted policies to incorporate pedestrian and bicycle safety standards or improvements into all road projects. For example, the city of Lake Worth, Florida, has adopted a city policy to include bicycle infrastructure whenever a street is repaved (see case study in Chapter III).
- ***Focus on the connections between different transportation modes and travelers’ origin or ultimate destination.*** In particular, consider the connection—known as the “last mile” (Figure 30)—between a transit stop and the traveler’s origin or destination. The ease and time of traveling between a bus or train stop and someone’s home,

workplace, or other destination is a critical factor in whether that individual will use transit. Providing the “last mile” connection may be as easy as simply filling a gap in the sidewalk, as in the example of the Lamar Station Crossing Apartments, a multifamily, mixed-income housing property located just a few hundred feet from a light-rail station in Lakewood Colorado (see case study in Chapter III). Another potentially simple solution is adding bicycle racks on buses, which can allow riders to easily access destinations within several miles of a bus stop (Figure 31).

- ***Consider adopting a complete streets policy.*** Complete streets policies are city policies that direct transportation planners and engineers to design and operate streets to meet the needs



**Figure 31.** Bicycle racks on a bus in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Image Source: Metro Bus, Cincinnati, Ohio



**Figure 32. Lancaster Boulevard in Lancaster, California, before and after the implementation of traffic calming and other complete streets features.**

Image source: Lancaster Economic Development Department

of drivers, transit users, pedestrians of all ages and abilities, and bicyclists. A strong complete streets policy includes a vision for how and why a community wants to complete its streets, requires that both new and retrofit projects should be

designed to meet the needs of all users, specifies any exceptions, and establishes performance standards.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> National Complete Streets Coalition, “Policy Elements,” <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/changing-policy/policy-elements>.



### **Additional Tools and Resources**

- Housing + Transportation Index assesses the affordability of housing in communities based upon its location and its associated transportation costs. <http://htaindex.cnt.org/>.
- WalkScore is an online tool that scores communities by how easily individuals can access goods, services, and transportation via walking. The website also provides bike and transit scores. <http://www.walkscore.com/>.
- Framework for Action: Building the Fully Coordinated Human Service Transportation System provides a guide for coordinating human services agencies that support transportation with public and private transit providers, including self-assessment tools for communities and states and a facilitators guide. [http://www.unitedweride.gov/1\\_81\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://www.unitedweride.gov/1_81_ENG_HTML.htm).
- NACTO Urban Street Design Guide discusses principles, approaches, and tools for constructing attractive and multimodal streets and communities. <http://nacto.org/usdg-2013/>.
- NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide provides best practices and approaches for cities looking to construct safe and practical bike infrastructure. <http://nacto.org/cities-for-cycling/design-guide/>.
- Transit in Small Cities: A Primer for Planning, Siting, and Designing Transit Facilities in Oregon describes specific needs and challenges that small cities face in improving the performance, access, and effectiveness of their transit systems. <http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/TGM/docs/fulltransitprimer4-4-13.pdf>.
- Safe Routes to School programs help to design and implement safe ways for children to walk or bike to school. <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>.



## Goal C. Promote Accessible Affordable Housing in Connected Communities

***Encourage, enable, and preserve well-designed affordable housing in places that are easily accessible by foot, bicycle, and transit.***

The location and the design of affordable housing are critical factors in determining residents' transportation costs and the ease with which they can access critical destinations. Many small and mid-sized cities already have existing walkable neighborhoods with strong connections to jobs and services. These neighborhoods, however, often have relatively high property values, smaller and more challenging development sites, and more complicated development review processes, making it more expensive to build housing in established neighborhoods (known as "infill" development) than in outlying areas. Given the relatively high cost of building infill housing, cities should focus on preserving affordable housing that is already located in these neighborhoods, and removing barriers such as outdated zoning codes and parking requirements that contribute to higher development costs.

In addition to the influence of location, the design of affordable development can influence residents' mobility options. For example, housing developers can make walking more convenient and appealing by including retail on the ground floor of a multistory

building, placing buildings closer together and near the sidewalk, and ensuring that the streets and pedestrian walkways within a development project form a connected network and provide a variety of walking routes to common destinations. While small and mid-sized cities rarely have direct control over the design of new affordable housing, cities can put policies in place to encourage well-designed projects. Small and mid-sized cities can also work with local, state, and regional partners—including the local public housing authority, county housing agency, and state housing agency—to make preserving and promoting affordable housing in connected communities a priority in planning and funding allocation decisions.

The following strategies encourage, enable, and preserve high-quality, affordable housing:

- Identify existing affordable housing resources and neighborhoods with strong existing connections.
- Work with local, state, and regional partners to preserve and promote affordable housing in connected communities.



**Figure 33. The Park Alameda; resident with a new EasyPass bus pass (inset). The Park Alameda, which was formerly a motel, is a 62-unit affordable housing development in the small city of Alameda, California. The project is located in Alameda's historic downtown district, which offers excellent bus service and jobs, retail, and services located within walking distance. The developer, Resources for Community Development, joined the local transit agency's EasyPass program, which provides discounted bus passes for all residents. The project also includes green and sustainable features such as insulated low-emissivity windows and water-heating solar thermal collectors.**

Image source: Adam Newacheck, Resources for Community Development, 2013; AC Transit, 2013 (inset)



- Facilitate the development of accessible, affordable housing located in connected communities.

**Strategy 1. Identify existing affordable housing resources in neighborhoods with strong existing connections.**

- **Prepare an inventory of existing affordable housing located in connected communities.** Consider including not only subsidized units, but also market-rate units that are affordable to low- and moderate-income households. As part of the inventory, determine how far housing units are located from the nearest bus stop or other public transit option, schools, grocery stores, healthcare providers and other amenities. The inventory should also identify any potential hurdles to accessing services and amenities, such as long distances, missing sidewalks, or other physical barriers to the nearest bus stop. Creating a map of existing affordable housing in relationship to transit stops, services, and amenities can be an efficient way to identify these barriers. An example of a housing inventory is shown in Figure 35.
- **Use the housing inventory and other existing conditions assessments to prioritize housing, transportation, and other investments.** Direct local capital improvement funds toward improving pedestrian, bicycle, and other transportation connections around existing affordable housing, and work with the local public housing agency, state housing agency, and other housing funding partners to target affordable housing funding to projects located in existing connected communities. Coordinate with and educate local housing developers to look for opportunities to build housing near transit, services, and amenities.

**Strategy 2. Work with local, regional, and state partners to preserve and promote affordable housing in connected communities.**

- **Building on the inventory of existing affordable housing, track subsidized housing units that are at risk of being converted to market rate.** Many subsidized affordable housing units were built under federal or local programs that provided developers with funding or incentives, in return for restricting rents to affordable levels for low-income households. After the term of the initial contract is up, the property owner may choose to raise rents to market rate. Units that are owned by private property



**Targeting Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to Preserving and Promoting Affordable Housing near Rail and Frequent Bus Transit**

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC) is the largest single source of funding for affordable housing in the United States. The tax credits are awarded on a competitive basis to developers, and administered by state housing agencies. State housing agencies are required to adopt annual Qualified Allocation Plans that establish criteria for allocating the credits. Approximately 25 states currently set aside a portion of their LIHTC allocation for affordable housing preservation, while 36 states give preference to or require proximity to transit as criteria for receiving the tax credits. The LIHTC program has been used for numerous preservation projects nationally and can play a critical role in building future housing near transit.

Source: Center for Transit-Oriented Development and the National Housing Trust, "Mixed-Income Housing Near Transit, TOD 201"; National Housing Trust, "State Policy Toolkit."

owners and typically are in locations where market-rate rents are relatively high or rising are most at risk for conversion. Nonprofit owners—particularly those who specialize in affordable housing development and management—are more likely to extend existing contracts or find other funds to maintain affordability, while private property owners in places with low market-rate rents may not face a significant incentive to convert to market rate. By tracking the ownership and contract expiration dates of subsidized affordable housing on an ongoing basis, cities can be prepared to work with property owners, local affordable housing developers, and local and state funding partners to intervene when properties are at risk of being demolished or converted to market-rate rents.

- ***Use the housing planning process to prioritize the preservation and development of housing located in proximity to rail or frequent bus service.*** Federal law requires jurisdictions to submit several types of plans, such as the following, to receive federal housing funds:
  - ***Consolidated Plan.*** This plan is required for cities, urban counties, and states that receive block grant funds from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the HOME Investment Partnership (HOME), the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs.
  - ***Public Housing Agency Plan.*** This plan is required for local public housing authorities to receive funding from HUD, including Housing Choice Vouchers and operating and capital funds.
  - ***Qualified Allocation Plan.*** This plan is required for state agencies to receive Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) from the Treasury Department.

Including language in these plans about the importance of housing preservation and proximity to rail and frequent bus transit is the first step toward directing federal and other housing funds toward the preservation and development of affordable housing in connected communities. Cities that receive CDBG, HOME, ESG, or HOPWA funds directly—in general, cities with populations of at least 50,000—create their own Consolidated Plans. Smaller cities should work with the county or state agency charged with writing the Consolidated Plan to include language on preservation and transit proximity, while cities of all sizes can work with the local public housing authority and state housing agency to prioritize preservation and transit proximity in the Public Housing Agency and Qualified Action Plans.

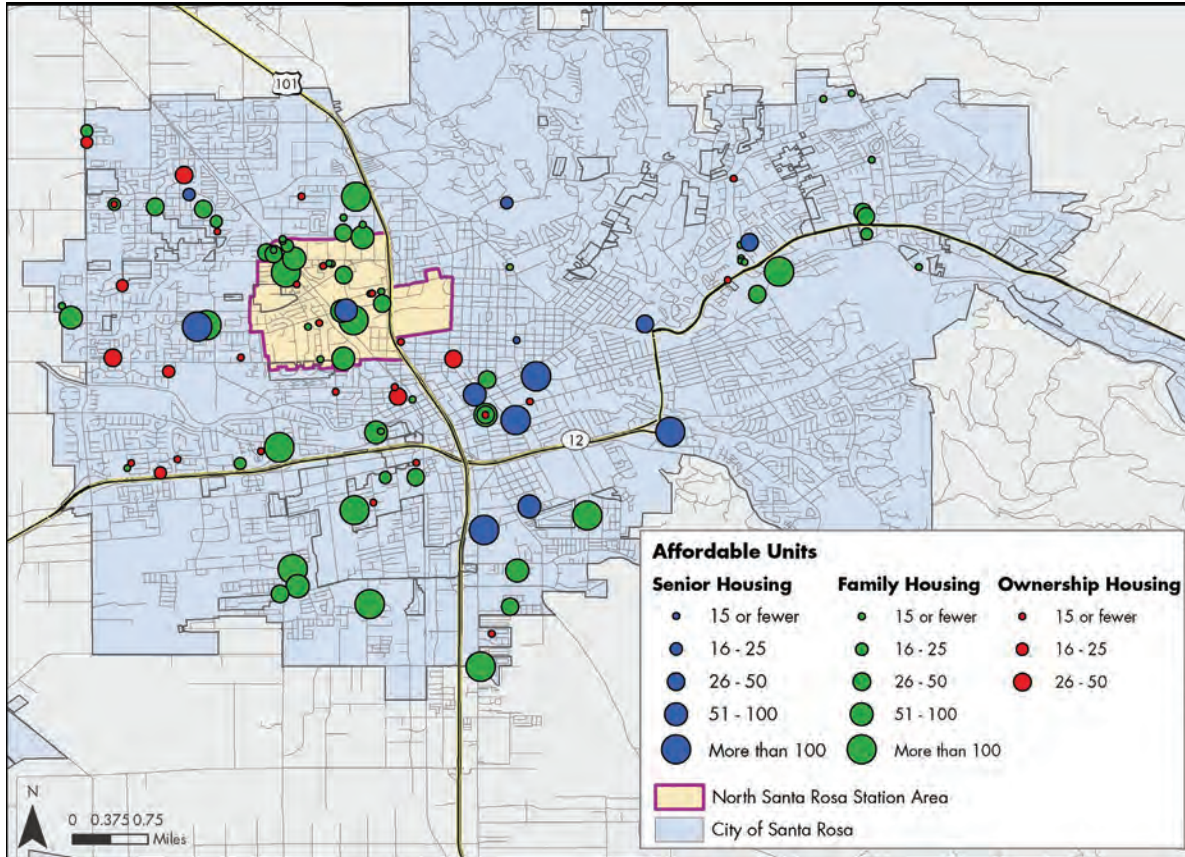


**Figure 34. Westhaven Park in Chicago, Illinois integrated public housing and market-rate units into an easily walkable environment near transit. The project restored the historical grid of the neighborhood, so that residents can choose to walk, bike, or take transit to their destinations.**

Image source: CNT, 2011



**Affordable Housing in Santa Rosa**



**Figure 35. Affordable Housing Units in the city of Santa Rosa, California, from the North Santa Rosa Station Area Specific Plan. As part of the planning process, the city inventoried and mapped all the subsidized units in the city, looking specifically at which units were located near the planned Sonoma-Marina Area Rail Transit (SMART) station and which were at risk of conversion to market rate by 2019.**

**At Risk Units**

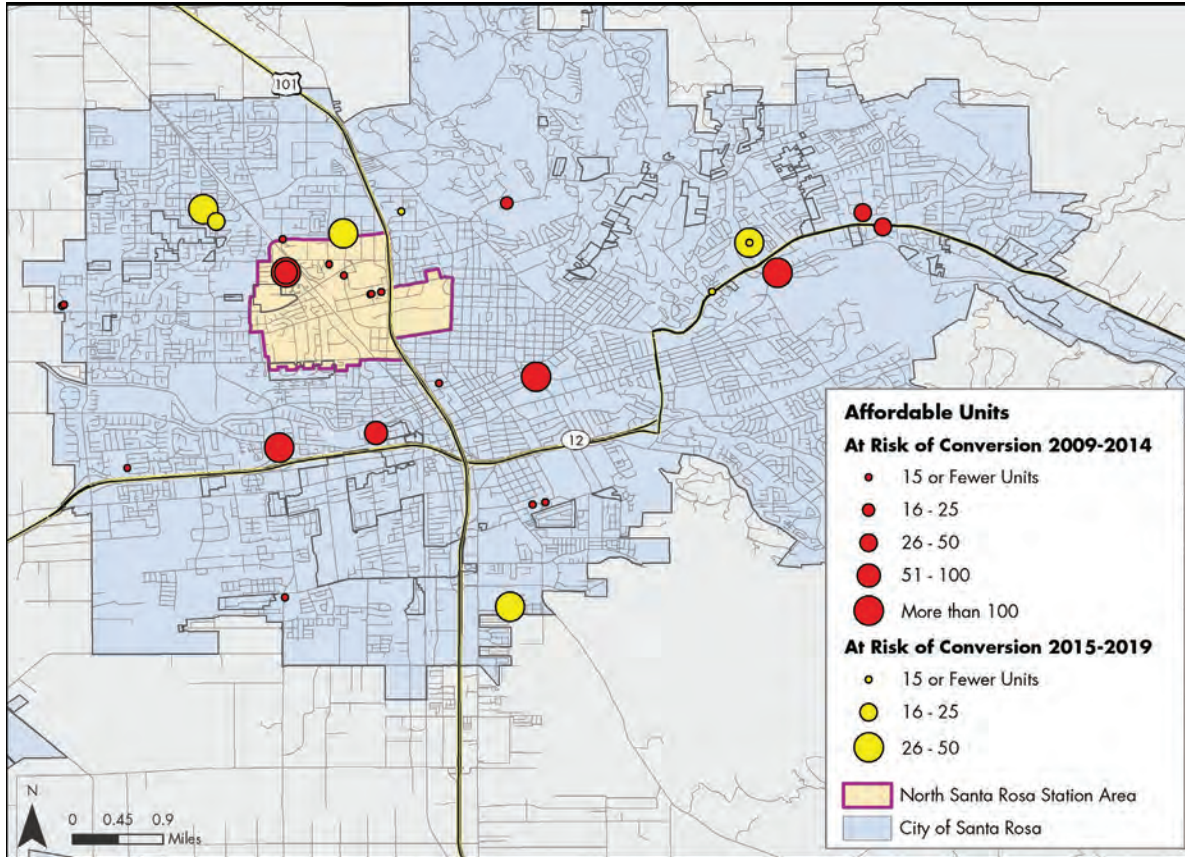


Image source: Strategic Economics and City of Santa Rosa, CA, 2011.



**Strategy 3. Facilitate the development of accessible, affordable housing located in connected communities.**

- **Encourage housing developers to involve transit providers in the early stages of project development.** Bring together local housing developers with the transit agency and encourage transit providers to get involved during the planning stage of development. For instance, transit providers may have insight on the best way to design sidewalks, lighting, and benches so that future residents can easily access the nearest bus station.
- **Remove regulatory barriers to developing affordable housing in infill locations.** Lengthy permitting processes, inflexible parking requirements, and other zoning requirements can make development in established neighborhoods more expensive and time consuming. Consider streamlining the permitting and review processes for projects that meet local goals; reducing parking requirements for low- and moderate-income units; and adjusting zoning to make it easier to build affordable housing in established communities with strong transportation connections.
- **For projects that involve public subsidy, consider whether the location, design, and transportation options offered by the project contribute to creating a connected community.** See the “Affordable Housing Design Checklist” for a list of location and design elements that cities, local public housing authorities, and other agencies should consider in allocating funding to specific projects.



**Affordable Housing Design Checklist**

To determine whether a proposed housing development contributes to creating a connected community, consider both the project’s location and design.

**Project Location.** Is the project located within walking distance ( $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile) of . . .

- A local bus, commuter bus, or rail station?
- Services and amenities (school, grocery store, pharmacy, public library, and/or senior center)?
- Trails, parks, or other recreational areas?
- Project Design. Does the project include . . .
- Housing units affordable to different income levels, including low- and moderate-income households?
- A street layout designed to encourage walking and bicycling, while providing for personal automobile use (if the project includes new streets)?
- Sidewalks and pedestrian crosswalks linking the housing development to the surrounding community, including to the nearest transit stop, services, and amenities?
- Elements that support the surrounding streetscape and respect the community’s character, including buildings that conform to local architectural styles and pedestrian-friendly amenities like trees, benches, and lighting?
- A mix of uses (for example, ground floor retail or services), if appropriate given the location?
- Parking that easily and safely accessible by pedestrians, but not visually dominant?

Source: New York State Department of Transportation, “Smart Growth Checklist: A Checklist for Proposed Development Projects in Your Community,” [https://www.dot.ny.gov/programs/smart-planning/repository/SGCheck\\_Development\\_Print.pdf](https://www.dot.ny.gov/programs/smart-planning/repository/SGCheck_Development_Print.pdf).

### ***Affordable Housing and Transportation Providers Working Together in Traverse City, Michigan***

The Village at Grand Traverse Commons is a 130-unit, mixed-use community in Traverse City, Michigan, that includes 60 affordable housing units. At the beginning of the project, the developers approached the Bay Area Transportation Authority, the local transit provider, to ensure that patrons of the development would have transit access. This initial conversation helped secure public transit access for the residents of the Village.

See the Traverse City case study in Chapter III for more information.



#### ***Additional Tools and Resources***

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides information, tools, programs, and resources on all aspects of affordable housing development and preservation and federal housing policy. <http://www.hud.gov/>.
- Mixed-Income Transit-Oriented Development Action Guide (MITOD) is an online tool for local jurisdictions to foster mixed-income communities near planned transit stations. <http://www.mitod.org/home.php>.
- The Preservation Guide (National Low Income Housing Coalition) discusses local policy tools for preserving federally assisted housing that would otherwise be demolished or converted to market rate; includes instructions for helping local communities create their own preservation databases to track federally assisted housing on an ongoing basis. <http://nlihc.org/library/other/preservation/guides/2010>.
- National Housing Trust offers policy solutions to preserving affordable housing near transit. <http://www.nhtinc.org/>.
- Housing Policy.org (Center for Housing Policy) is an online guide to state and local housing policy. Features a variety of tools to address a variety of housing needs. <http://housingpolicy.org/>.
- National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) is a professional association of housing and community development officials that provides training and resources related to affordable housing and community development. <http://www.nahro.org/>.

## Goal D. Support Established Neighborhoods

***Create and support cohesive and adaptable neighborhoods where all people have access to high-quality housing, education, employment opportunities, open space and recreation, retail, places of worship, health care, fresh foods, and transportation.***

In addition to having high-quality transportation choices and affordable housing, residents must also have access to other key destinations and services such as medical care, jobs, a healthy environment, fresh food, and green space. These and other elements are needed to make a community “complete”—a place where people can access everything they need for a good quality of life and economic and social opportunities. Many cities already have established neighborhoods where most of these elements are in place; in other cities, more effort will be required to ensure that existing neighborhoods offer a full range of services and amenities. By focusing on enhancing established neighborhoods, cities build on their existing assets, provide additional opportunities for existing residents, and improve the efficiency of municipal services.

This goal aims to support established neighborhoods by facilitating compact development, creating places for people, and connecting the city’s economic development strategy with its transportation planning. “Compact development” refers to building single-family homes, townhouses, apartments, condominiums, and retail and employment uses at medium or high densities that are appropriate to the local context. Compact development aims to maximize the use of available land and provide a mix of uses to make it easier for residents to access the goods and services they need without driving long distances. As discussed within goal C, however, building in existing neighborhoods with strong connections to jobs and services can be very expensive. Cities can make compact development more feasible by adjusting outdated zoning codes and removing other regulatory barriers.

Investments in walkable, people-friendly places make a city more attractive to employers, residents, and visitors alike. These types of “placemaking” strategies support established neighborhoods and have become particularly important in helping small and mid-sized cities compete as jobs and workers have become more

### ***Supporting Established Neighborhoods in Portland, Maine***

The Bayside neighborhood in Portland, Maine, is a historically industrial district with a compact, walkable urban environment located adjacent to the downtown. In 2000, the city of Portland, adopted A New Vision for Bayside—a plan to focus new development in the neighborhood in order to create an “attractive urban gateway featuring a mix of uses, compact and intensive development as an extension of the downtown.” In addition to targeting the neighborhood for new, higher intensity development in its land use plans, the city successfully pursued federal funding for brownfield cleanup and infrastructure projects in Bayside. Today, the neighborhood is experiencing a boom in office and residential development. The new residents and workers will be able to take advantage of the neighborhood’s strong pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections. At the same time, the higher intensity development will help support additional retail and services, further enhancing the neighborhood’s walkability over time.

See the Portland case study in Chapter III for more information.



## Chapter IV. Implementation: What is Next?

mobile, and increasingly likely to select locations based on quality of life. Finally, cities can help improve access to employment for residents by explicitly coordinating economic development strategies with transportation planning efforts. These strategies are discussed below:

- Facilitate compact development patterns.
- Create “places for people.”
- Connect the city’s economic development strategy with its transportation planning.

### **Strategy 1. Facilitate compact development patterns.**

- ***Ensure that zoning supports the development pattern the city envisions.***

The zoning code should allow for the siting of schools, jobs, day cares and other destinations in areas with multimodal transportation access. Conduct a zoning review to remove barriers to locating appropriate nonresidential uses in existing neighborhoods.

- ***Adjust land use regulations to promote compact development in established neighborhoods.*** Cities can enable compact development by adjusting zoning policies in downtowns and other neighborhoods with well-developed pedestrian, bicycling routes, and convenient bus or other transit connections. Consider adjusting height and density standards to enable higher intensity development, and enacting form-based codes that regulate the design and physical form of buildings rather than their use.
- ***Encourage mixed-use developments.*** Consider allowing mixed-use development to occur “by right” (that is, without a variance or other special zoning permission) in designated districts. Easing the process for approval of mixed-use developments in appropriate locations can help to make projects more feasible, saving cities and developers time and money.
- ***Reform parking requirements.*** Inflexible parking requirements can make compact development much more expensive. Consider adjusting the zoning ordinance to reduce the



**Figure 36. Latham Square in downtown Oakland, California, is an example of placemaking that relies on relatively low-cost materials (paint on pavement, planter boxes, and signage made of recycled street signs) to create a pedestrian and bike-friendly public plaza. The pilot project closed the area off to automobile access and a technical advisory committee made up of city staff members, local business owners, residents, and advocacy groups, is currently evaluating design configurations of the plaza and intersecting roadways for a potential permanent project at the site.**

Images source: Strategic Economics, 2013

number of parking spaces required of new development in walkable, bikeable places with good transit access. Other parking management strategies include establishing maximum, rather than minimum, parking requirements; allowing different land uses ( offices, retail, housing, transit stations) to share parking facilities; and encouraging the unbundling of parking. Unbundling parking separates the cost of parking from the cost of a housing unit, thereby freeing residents without cars from the costs associated with parking and incentivizing the provision of fewer parking spaces.

**Strategy 2. Create “places for people.”**

- Use “placemaking” strategies to create gathering places that are appealing to residents and visitors. Placemaking refers to using landscaping, street and façade improvements, and the creation of new spaces such as plazas and parks to attract people to an area. This strategy ideally creates welcoming places that can contribute activity to nearby commercial areas or serve as outdoor community space for residents.
- Implement programming to increase activity in established commercial districts. For example, concerts, festivals, farmers markets, and other activities can be relatively low cost (compared with major capital investments) and help bring new visitors to a downtown or other commercial district, making them more attractive for employers and residents.

**Strategy 3. Connect the city’s economic development strategy with its transportation planning.**

- Ensure that the department or departments responsible for economic development in the city or region engage with the transportation departments, including the transit agency. Economic development strategies need to consider how new development or revitalization efforts will be made accessible to the larger community.

- Conduct an inventory of jobs currently located along major corridors or in the existing Main Street or downtown area, which are easier to serve with transit. Understanding what types of businesses and



**Additional Tools and Resources**

Employer-provided commuter benefits can save money for both employers and employees: <http://www.nctr.usf.edu/programs/clearinghouse/commutebenefits>.

PolicyLink Equitable Development Toolkit is an online toolkit that provides strategies to reverse patterns of segregation and disinvestment, prevent displacement, and promote equitable revitalization. The toolkit includes the Land Use and Environmental Tool Group, which provides strategies to support commercial districts and meet existing residents’ needs. [http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136575/k.39A1/Equitable\\_Development\\_Toolkit.htm](http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136575/k.39A1/Equitable_Development_Toolkit.htm).

re:Streets is an online resource providing best practices and case studies on mobility and access, wayfinding, commerce, social gathering, events and programs, play and recreation, urban agriculture, green infrastructure, and image and identity. <http://www.restreets.org>.

Smart Growth Network maintains a website with resources on smart growth tools and funding and grant opportunities. <http://www.smartgrowth.org>.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides information, tools, and resources on smart growth. <http://www.epa.gov/dced/index.htm>.

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what industries are already located in these places allows for the development of strategies to attract more jobs to these locations, allowing more people to access jobs via transit.

- Focus workforce training centers and programs in high-frequency transit corridors and downtown areas, and ensure that transit service is available at program times (for example, in the evening).

This will help to ensure that individuals from all parts of the region will be able to participate in the workforce, thus stabilizing neighborhoods and communities.

- Help employers understand the benefits of locating near transit. These include access to a broader workforce, reduced costs for their employees, less need to maintain parking spaces, etc.

## Goal E. Refocus Financial Resources

***Use existing financial resources more efficiently, seek out additional funding, and develop partnerships and programs to facilitate connected communities. Focusing public dollars on critical needs such as housing and transportation and better coordinating those investments will help to make optimal use of scarce fiscal resources.***

For many local leaders, the response to the policies discussed in this guidebook will be, “good idea, but how are we going to pay for that?” Public agencies at every level of government are feeling the pinch of the recent economic downturn. Even in those cities that have not been hit as hard, the need to fund ongoing community services and maintain existing infrastructure can consume every available dollar. Many cities feel constrained in their ability to seek out new sources of funding, due to lack of staff capacity, complexity of application processes, or lack of knowledge about other funding opportunities.

A lack of resources can be a particularly acute problem for smaller cities, which often rely in part on state revenue sharing and may have a limited local tax base. In addition, while federal funding can be a critical resource for smaller cities, some federal resources that are frequently used to address housing and transportation in larger cities are less likely to be available in small and mid-sized cities. In addition, existing federal sources of funding for transportation and housing are constrained and may be reduced farther in the future. Grants can be scarce, competitive, and unpredictable. Finally, small cities in a larger

### ***Building Partnerships and Applying for Grants in Gonzales, California.***

Gonzales, California, a small city with a population of slightly more than 8,000, places a high priority on developing partnerships with local business associations and local, state, and regional agencies.

To expand its capacity, the city routinely seeks out and applies for state and federal grants. For example, the city recently worked with the local district office of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to develop a work plan and obtain grant

funding for a Community to School Pedestrian Plan to provide children with safe routes to school. In 2012, the city worked with Monterey County and the city of Del Ray Oaks (another small city in the county) to become an entitlement community for the purpose of receiving Community Development Block Grant, or CDBG, funds.

See the Gonzales case study in Chapter III for more information.



metropolitan area may face intense competition with their neighbors for transportation and other funds that are allocated at a regional level.

Cities of every size and type, however, can take steps to ensure that they are using public dollars as efficiently as possible and are leveraging funding from other sources. As discussed in Chapter II, making upfront investments in creating connected communities can lead to fiscal savings over the long term.

Moreover, as discussed above in goal B, small amounts of funding for incremental projects or smaller scale neighborhood projects can make a significant difference for a city's residents. For example, improving sidewalks around neighborhood-based destinations or striping bicycle lanes along a city's street network are modestly sized projects compared with most transportation investments, but can go a long way toward making a neighborhood or city more connected. This is particularly important for small and mid-sized cities, as they tend to have fewer available dollars than their larger counterparts for large-scale capital investments. These smaller scale projects are also a good way to build community, political, and partner support for a broader range of transportation options by demonstrating the benefits of multimodal improvements.

Given the limited staff capacity and financial resources of many small and mid-sized cities, the strategies included below emphasize looking for state, regional, federal, and private-sector funds and partnerships that can help expand local capacity, and making more efficient use of existing resources. Strategies for reorienting financial resources include the following:

- Analyze existing resources and identify opportunities to use them more efficiently.
- Actively seek out federal and other funding opportunities.
- Develop partnerships and programs to facilitate connected communities.



### **State Transportation Funds**

Taxes on gasoline, which every state collects are one of the most important sources of funding for transportation projects at the state level. In some states, those tax revenues can be used for a variety of projects in addition to roads and highways, including transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. In other states, however, all state gas tax dollars are reserved for highway projects. Local leaders seeking state funding for nonhighway projects should work with partners to ensure that state policies on the use of state gas taxes are as flexible as possible.

### **Strategy 1. Analyze existing resources and identify opportunities to use them more efficiently.**

- **Reassess current uses of existing resources.** Are existing transportation and housing resources being used for the highest priority projects? Or are there funds that can be re-deployed for neighborhood improvements? Funding sources with broad eligibilities (such as Community Development Block Grants) are the most promising for this purpose, since they can be used for a wide variety of projects. It is important to review the eligible uses of all funding sources, however, because it may be that the needed improvements would qualify for funding from an unexpected source.
- **Look at current activities and seek lower cost ways to get things done.** Can projects be done more efficiently or at a lower cost? Can operations and maintenance be accomplished more efficiently? Some types of street and utility improvements have the potential to reduce infrastructure and utility maintenance costs over time (for example, bioswales, green streets,

## **Cheat Sheet: Key Federal Housing, Infrastructure, and Transportation Programs**

### **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)**

- Community Facilities Grants. Assistance in the development of essential community facilities in rural areas and towns of up to 20,000 in population.
- Rural Community Development Initiative. Technical assistance for nonprofit organizations and low-income rural communities to improve housing and community facilities in rural areas.

### **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**

- Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Planning Grants. Funding for the development of comprehensive plans to link affordable housing with high-quality education, public transportation, good jobs and safe streets.
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). Formula grants to local governments for community and economic development activities.
- Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Insures single-family housing and a variety of multifamily family housing projects, including mixed-income multifamily housing projects.
- HOME Program. formula funding to create affordable housing for low-income households, in the form of direct assistance or loan guarantees.
- HOPE VI Main Street Program. Assistance for revitalization of a historic or traditional central business district by replacing unused commercial space with affordable housing units.
- Section 108 Loan Guarantees. Source of financing for CDBG-eligible communities

economic development, public facilities, and other eligible large-scale physical development projects.

- State Administered CDBG. For cities with a population of less than 50,000 or counties with population of less than 200,000.

### **U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)**

- New Starts / Small Starts (FTA). Competitive program to help build light rail, commuter rail, streetcar, bus rapid transit, and rapid bus systems.
- Surface Transportation Program (FHWA). Flexible funding program that can help pay for roads, bridges, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects.
- Transportation Alternatives (FHWA). Eligible uses include bicycle and pedestrian projects and transportation station rehabilitation.
- Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery—TIGER (DOT). Funds innovative, multimodal projects.
- Urbanized Area Formula Funds (FTA). Provides funds for purchases rehab, and replacement of transit vehicles, equipment, and facilities.

### **U.S. Department of Treasury**

- Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. Generate equity capital for the construction and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing.

For more information about federal funding opportunities, see Reconnecting America's online resource center: <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/resource-center/federal-grant-opportunities/>.

drought-tolerant landscaping, and porous pavements).

- **Identify sources of funds that can be used together to achieve a common goal.** Some revenue sources (for example, federal grants, certain bond funds) can be used only for specific purposes, such as transportation infrastructure. Consider whether other public or private resources can be used on complementary activities, such as housing development or green space. Together, these different revenue sources can have a greater impact than if they are deployed separately.
- **Establish clear guidelines for future uses of existing revenue sources** that prioritize building the connections needed between affordable housing and transportation choices. For example, cities can target their affordable housing dollars to locations near transit.
- **Ensure that capital investments in schools, housing, transportation, and economic development are coordinated and that each investment supports the city's broader vision.** Using cross-sector working groups or teams can be an effective way to achieve this goal.

### **Strategy 2. Actively seek out federal and other funding opportunities.**

- **Seek out funding from federal programs** such as Transportation Alternatives, the Surface Transportation Program, New Starts/Small Starts, the Urbanized Area Transit Formula Program, Historic Preservation Credits, and Economic Development Administration funds. Although federal programs, like local ones, are facing fiscal pressures, many grants are still available to help support planning and building connected communities. Some grant programs require local agencies to apply directly to the federal government; however, many programs provide funding directly to states or metropolitan planning organizations, from which local agencies must

request funds. If local staff capacity is an issue, partner with other jurisdictions or agencies that may have more experience applying, or seek technical assistance from the federal agency. Many federal agencies also have staff members available to help smaller communities navigate the grant process, and some federal and state programs provide credit assistance and other financing tools in addition to direct grants and loans.

- **Research programs at the state or regional level for which your city may qualify.** Some states have grant or credit programs to support better linkages between transit and development. In other places, states have allowed cities to set up special tax districts to help finance certain projects.
- **Don't be afraid to go to the voters with a good plan.** Residents are often willing to support increased taxes for specific projects that have clearly articulated benefits. For example, from 2000 to 2009, 70 percent of transportation ballot measures passed nationwide, twice the approval rate of all ballot measures.

### **Strategy 3. Develop partnerships and programs to facilitate connected communities.**

- **Build partnerships with private or nonprofit organizations.** Partnering with private and nonprofit institutions can provide a city with access to new funding sources that are not directly tied to local real estate market conditions, tax revenues, or state or federal policy. Hospitals, universities, and major employers have all been known to provide funding for projects when the project will provide a direct benefit for them (for example, workforce housing or improved transportation options for staff).
- **Create new programs targeted to addressing specific challenges.** For example, if the transit system lacks sufficient bus shelters, explore the possibility of partnering with an



### ***Finding New Partners: The Mountain Link Story***

The Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority (NAIPTA) recently launched the Mountain Link, a new rapid bus system in Flagstaff, Arizona. The success of this project was the result of strong working relationships among NAIPTA, the community, elected officials, the Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization, the city of Flagstaff government, and Northern Arizona University (NAU). In addition to receiving local tax dollars for the Mountain Link from a successful ballot measure, NAIPTA received \$765,000 for the project from NAU. The Mountain Link rapid bus connects NAU's campus with downtown Flagstaff.



Image source: Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority, 2012

advertising firm to raise revenues for new shelters by selling ad space on them. If property values in established neighborhoods with good transportation connections are high and there is a risk that low-income families may be displaced, develop programs such as land banking to buy sites near transit or planned transit to be used for affordable housing. If the challenge is lack of developer interest in downtown locations, develop incentives to help spur economic activity in those areas.

## Appendix A. Annotated Bibliography

### 1. Resources Specifically Geared to Small- and Mid-Sized Communities

**City of Rochester, New York. “The Mid-Size City: Exploring Its Unique Place in Urban Policy. A Summary of the Rochester Conversation on Mid-Size Cities.” Rochester, NY, 2002.** [http://www.livable.org/storage/documents/reports/Other/The\\_Mid-Sized\\_City\\_Exploring\\_its\\_Unique\\_Place\\_in\\_Urban\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.livable.org/storage/documents/reports/Other/The_Mid-Sized_City_Exploring_its_Unique_Place_in_Urban_Policy.pdf)

A summary of a conference on mid-sized cities and urban policy that aimed to characterize mid-sized cities and their specific challenges in the areas of equity, smart growth and regionalism, economic development, and governance. Mid-sized cities are defined as having a population between 100,000 and 300,000 in a Metropolitan Statistical Area of 1 million or more people. The conference summary characterizes mid-sized cities as Forgotten middle—cities that have important roles in regional and national economies but do not get as much attention as their larger, world-class counterparts; Hub of mid-sized metro—cities that serve as the cultural, economic and governmental center of a mid-sized metropolitan area; Thinning city—cities with a stagnant or declining population, located in a metropolitan region where the population is being spread thinly across an ever-larger area; and Divided city—places that are small, yet large enough so that divisions of income, race, and class have reached a critical mass.

**Ferguson, Gary. *Characteristics of Successful Downtowns: Shared Attributes of Outstanding Small and Mid-Sized Downtowns. Research findings conducted for the Cornell University Civic Fellows Programs. Ithaca Downtown Partnership, September 2005.*** [http://www.tannermooredesign.com/downtownbtv\\_WP/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/characteristics-of-successful-downtowns.pdf](http://www.tannermooredesign.com/downtownbtv_WP/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/characteristics-of-successful-downtowns.pdf)

This report looks at 11 case studies of small- and mid-sized cities that have a regional and national reputation for outstanding downtown areas, and seeks to understand the attributes and strategies for creating successful downtowns. Mid-sized cities are defined as those with population between 25,000 and 250,000. While no single organizational model exists, commonalities among successful downtowns in small- and mid-sized cities include the presence of multiple traffic generators such as universities, public services, business districts, and entertainment centers; a walkable, pedestrian scale; a mix of different uses integrated into the downtown fabric; an active public/private commitment to planning and investing in the future of downtown; and strong, adjacent residential neighborhoods.

**Reconnecting America. *Mid-Sized Cities on the Move: A Look At the Next Generation of Rapid Bus, Bus Rapid Transit, and Streetcar Projects in the United States, December 2012.*** <http://reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/20121206midsizefinal.pdf>

This report focuses on mid-sized cities that are investing in their transit network to improve connectivity through the “next generation” of transit: rapid bus, bus rapid transit (BRT), streetcars, and other innovative services. The report defines mid-sized cities as those with populations between 50,000 and 250,000, and offers a typology of mid-sized cities based on their role in the region. Through an analysis of 14 case studies, the report presents best practices in transit planning and funding strategies, and makes recommendations for maximizing the benefits of new transit for cities. Compared with larger cities, mid-sized cities are less

economically diverse; often struggle to retain residents; have a smaller tax base and fewer resources; usually are less expensive and less burdened by congestion; have more friendly places; and more likely to have bus service than rail. Recommendations for an innovative approach to transit service in mid-sized cities include presenting transit as part of an overall vision for the community; choosing the mode that best fits the city's needs; communicating all benefits upfront; developing a good relationship between the land-use department and the transit agency; picking a route with potential; making the service attractive and convenient to riders; seeking early community input; working with businesses, institutions, property owners, and developers; enacting supportive zoning to facilitate ridership; and being creative in seeking financial support.

***Smart Growth America. City Versus Suburban Growth in Small Metro Areas: Analysis of U.S. Census Data in Metropolitan Statistical Areas Under 1 Million People, December 2012.*** <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/city-versus-suburban-growth-in-small-metro-areas.pdf>

This is a followup to a Brookings Institution report that found that cities in the nation's 51 largest metropolitan areas are growing faster than their suburbs for the first time in decades. This research focuses on smaller Metropolitan Statistical Areas with a population between 150,000 and 1 million, which have at least one primary city of at least 50,000 people. The report finds that population in small metropolitan areas grew from 2010 to 2011, and growth in these regions was likewise faster in cities than in suburbs. It also finds that the smaller the metropolitan area, the greater the growth. Small metropolitan areas in the Heartland (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota) experienced the strongest growth. The report briefly highlights five case studies to explore possible drivers of this growth: downtown

revitalization, cultural and artistic vibrancy, and smart growth strategies.

***Texas Tech Center for Multidisciplinary Research in Transportation. Synthesis of Successful Bicycle Planning in Mid-Size Cities. Technical Report for the Texas Department of Transportation, January 2011.*** [http://www.depts.ttu.edu/techmrtweb/Reports/Complete%20Reports/0-6582-1\\_revised.pdf](http://www.depts.ttu.edu/techmrtweb/Reports/Complete%20Reports/0-6582-1_revised.pdf)

This paper synthesizes successful practices of bicycle planning in mid-sized cities, including reviews of bicycle practices in the United States and successful experiences in planning, design, and implementation of bicycle facilities. Mid-sized cities are defined as those with population between 100,000 and 300,000. The research team conducted a survey of successful bicycle policies and practices in the United States, and identified common problems and key factors for promoting bicycling transportation. The paper presents several key findings: funding, culture, education, and engineering are equally important for promoting bicycling; funding and consistent commitment are the primary issues for transportation agencies, while safety is the primary concern for bicyclists; and issues and solutions for both bicycle users and city officials are fairly consistent across cities of various sizes. The paper also analyzes possible strategies and their effectiveness: having a bicycle Level of Service ordinance has little impact on success; bike plans are underused and should be used more effectively in mid-sized cities; and mid-sized cities might benefit from the introduction of a dedicated bicycle advocate employed by a transportation authority.



## 2. Reports That “Make the Case” for Connecting Affordable Housing and Transportation

***Center for Housing Policy and Center for Neighborhood Technology. Losing Ground: The Struggle of Moderate-Income Households to Afford the Rising Costs of Housing and Transportation, October 2012.*** [http://www.nhc.org/media/files/LosingGround\\_10\\_2012.pdf](http://www.nhc.org/media/files/LosingGround_10_2012.pdf)

This report analyzes the housing and transportation cost burdens of moderate-income households living in the 25 largest metropolitan areas at the end of the decade. It assesses the impact on combined housing and transportation costs of the rapid rise and fall of home prices during the 2000s, the recent rebound in rents, and the nation’s increased suburbanization during the past decade. It finds that housing and transportation costs increased more than income from 2000 to 2010, and moderate-income households are spending a disproportionate share of their incomes (59 percent, on average) on housing and transportation. The report also suggests some strategies to reduce the combined cost of housing and transportation, including the preservation of existing affordable homes in location-efficient areas; regulatory reforms to reduce the cost of creating new housing in location-efficient areas; incentives or requirements to include affordable housing within new development in location-efficient areas; land acquisition assistance to facilitate affordable homes near transit stations, job centers, and other amenities; mechanisms for ensuring long-term affordability; and policies that capture a portion of the value generated by public investments to support affordable homes in location-efficient areas.

***Center for Transit-Oriented Development. Mixed-Income Housing Near Transit: Increasing Affordability with Location Efficiency, September 2009.*** <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/091030ra201mixedhousefinal.pdf>

Makes the case for the importance of promoting mixed-income housing near transit and explains how increased demand for housing in walkable neighborhoods is creating barriers to providing and maintaining affordable, transit-oriented housing. Provides 11 strategies at various geographic levels that are proving successful in ensuring housing affordability near transit. Strategies include incentives for station-area planning or zoning, public/private partnerships, targeting existing funding for affordable housing to transit corridors, inclusionary housing ordinances, providing points in the low-income housing tax credit allocation process for proximity to transit, promoting infill development in transit zones, using value-capture mechanisms to fund affordable housing, land acquisition/banking funds, incentive-based zoning, tax increment financing, and reduced parking requirements.

***Center for Transit-Oriented Development. Preserving and Promoting Diverse Transit-Oriented Development Neighborhoods, October 2006.*** [http://www.cnt.org/repository/diverseTOD\\_FullReport.pdf](http://www.cnt.org/repository/diverseTOD_FullReport.pdf)

This report outlines the benefits of mixed-income transit-oriented development (TOD), the challenges of seizing the mixed-income TOD opportunity, and practical recommendations for creating more mixed-income housing in transit zones. Suggested strategies include instituting coordinated government programs for diverse TOD, targeting affordable housing and mixed-income developments to transit zones and corridors, using transportation policies and subsidies to encourage and fund affordable housing near transit, using planning tools to increase housing production at higher densities, accelerating efforts to preserve existing rental housing near transit, marrying efforts to reduce the cost of energy and produce affordable housing with efforts to promote TOD, educating consumers

about the cost of transportation and its effects, and developing new financing products and developer and investor capacity to deliver mixed-income TOD.

***Center for Transit-Oriented Development. Realizing the Potential: Expanding Housing Opportunities Near Transit, April 2007.***

<http://ctod.org/pdfs/2007RealizingPotential.pdf>

This study discusses how to strengthen the ties between affordable housing and TOD, with an emphasis on demand generated by households of different types and income levels. It provides a set of recommendations to federal, state and local policy makers and practitioners for enhanced coordination of housing goals with transit investments. It focuses on five case studies: Boston, Charlotte, Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Portland. The main barriers to tying affordable housing to TOD include high or increasing land prices around stations, lack of capital among affordable housing developers to acquire and hold land, limited funding for building new affordable housing, the complex financing structures that are needed for mixed-income and mixed-use projects, high development costs due to the need for land assembly and rezoning, costly parking requirements, and community opposition to density and affordable housing. Recommended strategies include identifying and using TOD opportunities, providing incentives that help catalyze the market, removing regulatory barriers, coordinating housing and transportation; and improving local technical capacity and data collection.

***Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy. Maintaining Diversity in America's Transit-Rich Neighborhoods: Tools for Equitable Neighborhood Change. Northeastern University, October 2010.*** <http://www.dukakiscenter.org/storage/TRNEquityFull.pdf>

Addresses the relationship between transit-rich neighborhoods (TRNs) and neighborhood diversity, and investigates the gentrification process and the

displacement of low-income households that can follow transit investments. The gentrification process can cause higher housing cost burdens, especially for renters, and an influx of car-owning households who are less likely to use transit. The report also offers a policy toolkit for equitable TRNs designed to directly address the most likely drivers of undesirable neighborhood change in TRNs. Tools are organized into three categories: planning tools, housing market tools, and transportation management tools; a case study is provided for each. Planning tools include a comprehensive transit-oriented development strategy, community benefits agreements, community engagement, coordinated planning by local government and transit agencies, and transit corridor planning. Housing market tools include TOD acquisition funds, housing trust funds and other acquisition funds, LIHTCs, corridor-based tax increment financing districts, inclusionary zoning, incentive programs for housing production, and incorporating affordable housing in joint development. Transportation management tools include transit incentives for housing developments, reduced parking requirements for residential development, unbundling the price of parking, and car sharing.

***Reconnecting America and National Housing Trust. Preserving Opportunities: Saving Affordable Homes Near Transit, 2007.***

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/about/conplan/pdf/savingtransit.pdf>

This report analyzes federally assisted (Section 8) affordable housing units near transit in eight cities: Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, New York City, Portland, St. Louis, and Seattle. More than 100,000 units assisted through the federal Section 8 program are located in close proximity to rail stations. Most of those units are covered by Section 8 rental assistance contracts set to expire by the end of 2012, posing the risk that landlords may opt out of the program to capitalize on market-rate rents.

***Reconnecting America. Locating Affordable Housing Near Transit: A Strategic Economic Decision. Policy Brief, September 2012.***

<http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/20120904AHpolicybrief.pdf>

This policy brief compiles recent research to demonstrate that one of the most economically efficient strategies for providing public services is to ensure that housing near public transportation is affordable to people with a range of incomes. The brief lists the economic benefits of bringing affordable housing and transit together, and provides policy recommendations to federal agencies, regional and local jurisdictions, and transit agencies. The economic benefits of affordable housing include creating jobs and spending in the local economy, attracting new employers and skilled labor, increasing revenues for states and localities, and reducing government spending by promoting sustainable and stable homeownership. Transit creates jobs, stimulates development, boosts business revenues, benefits local and state revenues, saves employers money, and helps conserve energy and decrease pollution. Providing affordable housing

near transit achieves all of these benefits, and frees up time for health-promoting activities and improves access to medical care. Transit agencies also benefit from increased ridership, increased competitiveness for federal grants, and reduced transit system costs.

***U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration. “Forging Transit-Bicycle-Pedestrian Partnerships for Livable, Sustainable Communities.” Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program, Peer Roundtable. San Antonio, TX, 2010.*** [http://www.planning.dot.gov/peer/SanAntonio/Bicycle\\_TransitMPOs\\_2010.pdf](http://www.planning.dot.gov/peer/SanAntonio/Bicycle_TransitMPOs_2010.pdf)

This report summarizes presentations and discussions from a roundtable discussion on “Forging Transit-Bicycle-Pedestrian Partnerships for Livable and Sustainable Communities” held in conjunction with the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, in October 2010. It presents key concepts shared by panelists and the policy recommendations that emerged from the roundtable session.

### 3. Other Resources on Affordable Housing, Jobs, and Transit

***Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program. Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America. The Brookings Institution, May 2011.*** [http://www.brookings.edu/-/media/research/files/reports/2011/5/12%20jobs%20and%20transit/0512\\_jobs\\_transit.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/-/media/research/files/reports/2011/5/12%20jobs%20and%20transit/0512_jobs_transit.pdf)

This is the first report from a data collection effort that resulted in a comprehensive database of schedule and geospatial data for all transit systems in the nation’s 100 largest metropolitan areas. The report explores how well and how often transit serves neighborhoods in these metropolitan areas, and how many and what kinds of jobs are accessible via transit within a 90 minute commute. It also assesses the regional and local factors that relate to these measures of transit

access and job connectivity. The report finds that 70 percent of residents live in neighborhoods with access to transit, but rush hour frequency is low (10 minutes), and, on average, only about 30 percent of the metropolitan area jobs can be reached via transit within a reasonable time. Suggested strategies for improving transit access to jobs include considering job access in transportation decisions; focusing on bus rapid transit (BRT) and buses, especially in the short term; encouraging company-owned transportation services; and promoting ride sharing and carpooling. Beyond the transportation arena, communities can integrate land use, housing, and transportation planning; explicitly address transit accessibility in growth policy; focus on vulnerable populations; and deploy data and technology for decisionmaking.



***Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program. Where the Jobs Are: Employer Access to Labor by Transit. The Brookings Institution, July 2012.*** <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2012/7/transit%20labor%20tomer/11%20transit%20labor%20tomer%20full%20paper.pdf>

This study analyzes the transit connectivity of metropolitan labor pools to jobs in the country's 100 largest metropolitan areas. It explores the share of jobs that are located near transit networks, and the size of the labor force within reach of those job locations via transit. The report finds that more than three-fourths of the jobs in these metropolitan areas are in neighborhoods with transit service, but, on average, a job location is reachable with a 90-minute transit commute by only 27 percent of the workforce, signaling a disconnect between jobs and housing. This phenomenon is worse for suburban areas, where job access rates are usually even lower. To address the disconnect, the report suggests including job locations in investment decisions; seeking private financial support, for example, value-capture techniques; promoting employer-sponsored transit services; encouraging job development in transit-friendly suburban locations; incentivizing higher density development in suburbs; reforming governance to match transit service areas with regional economies; and investing in data systems to improve decisionmaking.

***Center for Housing Policy. Public Transit's Impact on Housing Costs: A Review of the Literature. Insights from Housing Policy Research, August 2011.*** [http://www.nhc.org/media/documents/TransitImpactonHsgCostsfinal\\_-\\_Aug\\_10\\_20111.pdf](http://www.nhc.org/media/documents/TransitImpactonHsgCostsfinal_-_Aug_10_20111.pdf)

This report summarizes research exploring the ways in which public transit has been shown to influence housing costs for owners and renters in the United States. It finds that proximity to public transit leads to higher home values and rents. The magnitude of this

impact is much debated and depends on a number of factors, but, in general, higher housing costs correlate with better transit service (for example, fast, frequent service that connects to important destinations), supportive land uses, and a public commitment to maximize development potential near transit. Suggested strategies to mitigate rising costs include affordable housing preservation, inclusionary zoning, tax increment financing, early-stage land acquisition, long-term affordability, and conditional FTA transportation funding.

***Center for Transportation Studies. Maximizing the Benefits of Transitway Investment. University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs, September 2012.*** <http://www.cts.umn.edu/Research/featured/transitways/maximizing/>

This report examines the current fixed-route transit system in the Twin Cities area to assess the extent to which it is providing the region's workers with access to jobs and its employers with access to labor. It focuses on "competitive clusters" of jobs, defined as a "geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities." The report analyzes different growth scenarios to identify how to maximize the return on investment in 14 transitways planned for 2030. The report includes the following main findings: more than 80 percent of competitive cluster jobs are within a one-half-mile radius of transit stations, but only between 10 and 40 percent are served by high-frequency transit service; on average, about 7 percent of jobs are accessible within a 60-minute transit ride in the morning peak period; the share of workers that any given employer has access to via transit is very limited (less than 15 percent) outside the downtown; job accessibility by transit is higher for blocks with lower median income, but this finding is mostly driven by the large proportion of low-income populations living in the city center; the 2030 transit

system will increase job accessibility, and the highest gains will be achieved if population and jobs are concentrated within the Interstate (I)-494/I-694 loop and near transit stations; and job concentration will have a larger impact than housing concentration on improving job accessibility.

***Enterprise, National Housing Trust, and Reconnecting America. Preserving Affordable Housing Near Transit: Case Studies from Atlanta, Denver, Seattle and Washington, D.C., 2010.*** <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/preservingaffordablehousingneartransit2010.pdf>

This report is designed to help community leaders, CDCs, and nonprofit affordable housing developers engage in preserving affordable housing near transit. It describes ways in which metropolitan areas are addressing preservation challenges and opportunities, and identifies the strategies and tools communities can use to preserve affordable housing in transit-rich neighborhoods. The study focuses on four metropolitan areas with current commitments to expanding transit service: Atlanta, Denver, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. Strategies for preserving affordable housing near transit include acquiring land/buildings close to planned transit before prices increase; targeting at-risk, affordable properties near planned transit for conservation; and targeting physically distressed properties in appreciating neighborhoods. Suggested tools include acquisition funds, housing trust funds, tenants' right of first refusal, land banking authority,

inclusionary zoning, and joint agency planning. Basic first steps that can be taken include creating an affordable housing inventory, identifying acquisition resources, assessing repositioning resources, and mapping out regional strategies.

***International City/County Management Association. Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities, 2010.*** [http://reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/2010\\_smartgrowthrural.pdf](http://reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/2010_smartgrowthrural.pdf)

This report shows how smart growth approaches can be adapted and applied in the rural context, particularly in times of change. It identifies key issues faced by five different types of communities: gateway communities, resource-dependent communities, edge communities, traditional Main Street communities, and second-home and retirement communities. The main challenges that these communities face include fewer farms and farmers, loss of forest land, rapid growth at metropolitan edges, shrinking population in other areas, a lack of transportation options for accessing jobs and services, and limited planning capacity. The report provides smart growth strategies and policy tools for rural decisionmakers who want to ensure that economic opportunity and growth meet the needs of new and current residents and businesses without fundamentally altering community character. Smart growth strategies are organized around three broad goals: support the rural landscape, help existing places thrive, and create great new places.

## 4. Resources Focused on Tools and Strategies

***Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program. Transit Access and Zero-Vehicle Households. The Brookings Institution, August 2011.*** [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/files/rc/papers/2011/0818\\_transportation\\_tomer/0818\\_transportation\\_tomer.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/files/rc/papers/2011/0818_transportation_tomer/0818_transportation_tomer.pdf)

Using the same dataset as the Missed Opportunity study (100 largest metropolitan areas), this second report focuses on households that do not own a car and analyzes their characteristics. It then examines how many of these zero-car households have access to transit and how well transit connects them with metropolitan job opportunities. The analysis finds

that zero-vehicle households constitute about 10 percent of all households; most of them live in cities and earn lower incomes, and 90 percent of them live in a neighborhood with transit access (a much higher share than households with a vehicle). On average, however, they are connected to only 40 percent of the metropolitanwide jobs within a 90-minute transit commute.

***Center for Housing Policy. A Heavy Load: The Combined Housing and Transportation Burdens of Working Families, October 2006.***

[http://www.nhc.org/media/documents/pub\\_heavy\\_load\\_10\\_06.pdf](http://www.nhc.org/media/documents/pub_heavy_load_10_06.pdf)

This report analyzes the tradeoff that households face between paying a greater share of household income for housing, or enduring longer commutes and higher transportation costs. Uses the H+T<sup>®</sup> Affordability Index to study the combined burden of housing and transportation costs on working families in 28 metropolitan areas; a combined housing and transportation cost of 57 percent of income is consistent across regions for this population. The report profiles households that are living in neighborhoods with different combinations of housing and transportation costs, showing that families who live in places with both high housing costs and high transportation costs are predominantly moderate-income renter households with limited transit options and lower quality of life. The report provides some policy recommendations to address these issues.

***Center for Housing Policy. Local Policy Options to Support Sustainable and Equitable Development. Ideas for Housing Policy and Practice, September 2011.*** [http://www.nhc.org/media/documents/ORAMlocal\\_final2.pdf](http://www.nhc.org/media/documents/ORAMlocal_final2.pdf)

This paper is part of a series of briefs that summarize the policy options available to officials at different levels of government who are interested in encouraging equitable and location-efficient growth. This brief

describes the options available at the local level. The paper discusses strategies that promote compact development patterns; create a supporting regulatory framework; support the acquisition of well-located land for affordable homes; use value capture to support affordable homes; and preserve and extend the availability of affordable homes in location-efficient areas.

***Center for Housing Policy. Regional Policy Options to Support Sustainable and Equitable Development. Ideas for Housing Policy and Practice, September 2011.*** [http://www.nhc.org/media/documents/ORAMregional\\_final.pdf](http://www.nhc.org/media/documents/ORAMregional_final.pdf)

This paper is part of a series of briefs that summarize the policy options available to officials at different levels of government who are interested in encouraging equitable and location-efficient growth. This brief describes the policy options available at the regional level (for example, for councils of government, mayoral caucuses, and metropolitan planning organizations) and discusses how regional entities can provide financial support for local communities to take needed actions; democratize access to needed data; plan at the regional level for new development; and facilitate coordination among jurisdictions or across agencies to raise and/or leverage revenue.

***Center for Housing Policy, National Housing Conference, and What Works Collaborative. Challenges and Policy Options for Creating and Preserving Affordable Housing near Transit and in Other Location-Efficient Areas, December 2010.*** [http://www.nhc.org/media/files/chp\\_affordablehousing\\_TOD\\_challengesandoptions1.pdf](http://www.nhc.org/media/files/chp_affordablehousing_TOD_challengesandoptions1.pdf)

This report examines specific, actionable, nonstatutory changes that HUD and partner agencies could adopt to better facilitate and encourage the development and preservation of affordable and workforce housing in



location-efficient areas. It focuses on four main areas: developing sustainable and inclusive communities, ensuring long-term affordability around transit, serving very low-income residents around transit, and preserving and fostering affordable housing opportunities in the broader neighborhood.

***Center for Housing Policy and National Housing Conference. “HousingPolicy.org Toolbox.”*** <http://www.housingpolicy.org/toolbox/index.html>

This online resource provides an overview of successful housing policies and examples of how they have been used to achieve key policy goals, including ensuring the availability of affordable homes, meeting the housing needs of older adults, improving home resistance to natural disasters, preventing foreclosures and stabilizing neighborhoods, and promoting sustainable and equitable development.

***Center for Neighborhood Technology. “H+T Affordability Index.”*** <http://htaindex.cnt.org/>

This online tool provides data about the combined cost of housing and transportation at neighborhood level, allowing users to visualize maps, charts, and statistics for all block groups in nearly 900 metropolitan and micropolitan areas. The Index shows that transportation costs vary between and within regions depending on neighborhood characteristics. People who live in location-efficient neighborhoods—compact, mixed use neighborhoods with convenient access to jobs, services, transit, and amenities—tend to have lower transportation costs. People who live in location inefficient places that require automobiles for most trips are more likely to have high transportation costs. A user guide is located at <http://www.htaindex.org/help.php>. Various known uses of the tool are outlined at <http://www.htaindex.org/applications.php>. A companion toolkit is located at <http://www.htaindex.org/downloads/toolkit.pdf>

***Center for Transit-Oriented Development. “Mixed-Income Transit-Oriented Development Action Guide.”*** *Online tool.* <http://www.mitod.org/>

Online tool for local jurisdictions working to foster mixed-income transit-oriented development (MITOD) around planned transit stations. The goal is to help practitioners identify the most appropriate and effective planning tools to achieve MITOD in their transit station area. It gives guidance on the planning process for MITOD, describes a range of strategies that can be pursued, and identifies related tools to put them to work. Strategies and tools are identified to address the following goals: prevent displacement via regulation, preserve TOD-appropriate affordable housing, increase affordable homeownership opportunities, promote affordable housing development, finance TOD-targeted housing, preserve affordable housing development opportunities, reduce the cost of housing production, leverage market-rate development, promote transit among low-income populations, and site public facility investments in station areas.

***Center for Transit-Oriented Development. Station Area Planning: How To Make Great Transit-Oriented Places, February 2008.*** <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/tod202.pdf>

This manual is designed to help practitioners involved in transit-oriented development (TOD) planning. It identifies seven “TOD place types” based on location characteristics (primary function, transit modes available, land use mix, and density), and provides a diagnostic tool to classify a particular station into one of these types. The eight types identified are regional center, urban center, suburban center, transit town center, urban neighborhood, transit neighborhood, special use/employment district, and district corridor. Strategies for which specific steps and recommendations are outlined include maximizing transit ridership, generating community involvement,

designing streets for all users, creating opportunities for affordable and accessible living, making great public spaces, managing parking effectively, capturing the value of transit, maximizing neighborhood and station connectivity, and implement the plan and monitor progress.

***Center for Transit-Oriented Development. Tools for Mixed-Income TOD, August 2006.***

<http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/tools.pdf>

This document evaluates tools and strategies in use around the country to create mixed-income and affordable housing near transit, with best practices and examples of how the tools are used in transit-oriented development projects. The report offers recommendations and a discussion of limitations and pitfalls in an effort to increase the successful application of the strategies in various political and economic contexts. For example, incentive-based zoning is recommended for communities where policymakers wish to encourage but not require mixed-income or mixed-use development; inclusionary housing or zoning has the advantage of delivering affordable housing without public agency financing or land acquisition but is unlikely to produce enough units to cover all needs, especially in weaker markets; and joint development is a promising tool but can be challenging on several fronts due to transit agencies' need for revenues, high costs, and lenders' perception of risk.

***Center for Transportation Studies. Asking the Right Questions About Transportation and Land Use. University of Minnesota, March 2007.***

<http://www.cts.umn.edu/Publications/ResearchReports/reportdetail.html?id=1272>

This is the first research summary for the Access to Destinations project, which seeks to understand how people use the transit system in the Twin Cities area, and how transportation and land use interact in the region, with a focus on the concept of accessibility

rather than mobility. The paper explores different measures of accessibility (including an original measure called Place Rank), how they relate to home prices, and how they evolved over time.

***Center for Transportation Studies. Measuring What Matters: Access to Destinations. University of Minnesota, August 2010.***

<http://www.cts.umn.edu/Publications/ResearchReports/pdfdownload.pl?id=1426>

This is the second report in the Access to Destinations series. It finds that, while congestion has worsened in the Twin Cities area, accessibility by automobile and via alternative modes of transportation has improved, with most of the improvement explained by land use changes. The study also finds that high accessibility to jobs has a positive effect on home values, while high accessibility to workers has the opposite effect, indicating homebuyers will pay a premium to live near jobs and away from competing workers.

***Center for Transit-Oriented Development and Living Cities. Fostering Equitable and Sustainable Transit-Oriented Development. Briefing Papers for a Convening on Transit-Oriented Development, February 2009.***

[http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/about/conplan/pdf/Fostering\\_Equitable\\_and\\_Sustainable\\_TOD.pdf](http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/about/conplan/pdf/Fostering_Equitable_and_Sustainable_TOD.pdf)

This document is a collection of briefing papers for a meeting convened by CTOD, Living Cities, and the Boston College Institute for Responsible Investment in 2009, with the goal of bringing a diverse set of stakeholders together to assess the opportunities for promoting and bringing to scale the market for equitable and sustainable transit-oriented development (TOD) in the current economic and political climate. These papers are focused on the critical roles different stakeholder groups can play both individually and collectively to catalyze opportunities for TOD implementation across the country, and to explore new models and tools that will respond to the needs of the 21st century.

***Comeau, Chris. “Moving Beyond the Automobile: Multimodal Transportation Planning in Bellingham, Washington.” *Practicing Planner* 7, no. 3 (Fall 2009). <http://www.mrsc.org/artdocmisc/b45beyauto.pdf>***

This case study examines the evolution of Bellingham, WA (pop. 75,750) from auto-centric and roadway-based transportation planning to inclusive, flexible, and integrated multimodal transportation planning and concurrency standards. Concurrency is a policy and regulatory requirement by which local governments must ensure that adequate public facilities and services are available at the time the impacts of new land development occur, according to locally adopted level of service (LOS) standards. The case study also discusses the shortfalls of employing conventional LOS methods in urban settings and explains how Bellingham’s transportation planners created innovative new LOS methods specifically designed to help achieve the infill and multimodal goals and policies of the city’s comprehensive plan.

***FRESC and Enterprise. Making Affordable Housing At Transit a Reality: Best Practices in Transit Agency Joint Development, 2010.*** <http://www.fresc.org/downloads/TransitDev.pdf>

This report analyzes transit agency approaches to affordability in joint development in 24 U.S. cities, summarizing best practices and outcomes. Joint development projects are defined as policies or projects involving a transit agency’s sale or lease of land to a private developer for the purposes of development near or connected to public transit stops or stations. Joint development helps facilitate the development of affordable housing near transit by solving one of the biggest barriers to affordable TOD, namely the ability to secure land.

***New Jersey Department of Transportation and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Smart Transportation***

***Guidebook: Planning and Designing Highways and Streets That Support Sustainable and Livable Communities, March 2008.*** <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/community/mobility/pdf/smarttransportationguidebook2008.pdf>

This handbook provides guidelines for improving the roadway system in accordance with Smart Transportation principles. It is intended to help agencies, local governments, developers, and others plan and design roadways of all classifications (from principal arterial highways owned by the state government to local roadways) that fit within the existing and planned context of the community through which they pass. The handbook presents seven place types (rural, suburban neighborhood, suburban corridor, suburban center, town/village neighborhood, town/village center, and urban core) and suggests different types of roadways suitable to each. The handbook provides detailed guidance on how to design roadways and roadsides, including lanes, parking, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, intersections, landscaping, and traffic management. It designed to be used by communities of all sizes to guide implementation of an integrated housing and transportation strategy.

***PolicyLink, “Equitable Development Toolkit.”*** [http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136575/k.39A1/Equitable\\_Development\\_Toolkit.htm](http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136575/k.39A1/Equitable_Development_Toolkit.htm)

This online guide presents community leaders and advocates with a set of policy options and strategies to advance economic and social equity. The recommendations are geared toward helping decisionmakers achieve diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods that provide access to opportunities for employment, education, and safe, affordable housing. The toolkit includes a section on transit-oriented development (TOD) that presents the main concepts of TOD, its benefits and key players, and a discussion of four main strategies to pursue equity goals within



TOD: community engagement, community-led TOD, community benefits around TOD, and commercial stabilization in TOD.

***Reconnecting America. Somerville Equitable Transit-Oriented Development Strategy, Report Prepared for the Somerville Community Corporation, May 2008.*** <http://www.somervillema.gov/sites/default/files/CompPLan/SCC-ReconnectingAmericaEquitableTOD2008.pdf>

This document analyzes the challenges and opportunities for equitable transit-oriented development in Somerville, Massachusetts, a community with a diverse population of 77,500 in the Boston region. It suggests some common strategies for equitable development near transit and how they might be applied in the city. This report could serve as a model for other small cities that already have robust multimodal transportation networks and are trying to preserve and expand affordable housing near stations while facing growth pressures.

***U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research. A Model Housing Transportation Plan: Coordinating Housing and Transportation, June 2012.*** [http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/model\\_housing\\_transportationplan.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/model_housing_transportationplan.pdf)

This report describes the process and outcome of developing a Housing-Transportation Plan for the Overtown station in Miami, Florida. The plan considers land availability, affordable housing options, existing and proposed development incentives, financing options, and ridership and travel trends. The plan is unique to the chosen site but can serve as a model for jurisdictions with similar traits. It explores a number of tools that local jurisdictions can use to help encourage the development of affordable housing near transit in their own communities, and it makes suggestions for implementation. The main

components of the process were a mixed-income transit oriented development (MITOD) opportunity analysis; a MITOD strategy analysis; development of a “maximum plan” based on the maximum density allowed under current zoning regulations; and development of a “market plan” based on densities that stakeholders felt were realistic and marketable. Both plans include street network integration, pedestrian-friendly streets, open spaces, amenities, and appropriate parking treatment.

***U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Better Coordination of Transportation and Housing Programs to Promote Affordable Housing Near Transit. Report to the Congress, August 2008.*** [http://www.huduser.org/portal/publications/better\\_coordination.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/portal/publications/better_coordination.pdf)

A followup to *Realizing the Potential: Expanding Housing Opportunities Near Transit*, this report outlines strategies developed by the FTA and HUD at the federal level to coordinate between transportation and housing programs on mixed-income and affordable housing near transit.

***U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration. Transit At the Table II: A Guide to Participation in Metropolitan Transportation Decisionmaking for Transit Agencies in Small- and Medium-Sized Metropolitan Areas. U.S. Department of Transportation, June 2010.*** <http://www.planning.dot.gov/documents/TransPlanning/TransTableII.pdf>

This study assesses the experiences of public transportation agencies working with MPOs on transportation planning in small and medium-sized regions (population 50,000 to 200,000). Through various examples, the report makes the case that transit agencies’ proactive involvement in many regions resulted in direct benefits for the agency and

for the profile and level of transit service in the area. It also finds that participation in the MPO process can improve regional policy support for transit and leverage additional funding opportunities. The report is solely focused on transit agencies and does not address housing issues.

***U.S. Department of Transportation and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Federal Barriers to Local Housing and Transportation Coordination, August 2011.*** <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/dothudbarriersreportfinal082511clean-2.pdf>

This report investigates the barriers to local coordination of housing and transportation resulting from HUD and DOT regulations, summarizes ongoing efforts within the agencies to address these barriers, and presents a list of provisions in HUD and DOT regulations where improved coordination would better support local strategies.

***U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Urban and Suburban Zoning Codes, November 2009.*** [http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/pdf/2009\\_essential\\_fixes.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/pdf/2009_essential_fixes.pdf)

This report identifies the most common barriers to smart growth in codes and ordinances, and suggests actions to improve land development regulations and implement smart growth approaches. It presents 11 “essential fixes” to common problems, and includes specific implementation steps and examples. The document focuses on urban and suburban communities but many suggestions can apply to communities of any size. For example, the report specifically addresses how to implement mixed-use zones, reform the use of Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), fix parking requirements, modernize street standards, and use green infrastructure.

## Appendix B. Housing + Transportation Affordability Index Methodology

The Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing + Transportation (H+T<sup>®</sup>) Affordability Index was used to develop the maps and data included in the case studies in Chapter III. The H+T Index is an innovative tool that measures the true affordability of housing by calculating the transportation costs associated with a home's location. Planners, lenders, and most consumers traditionally measure housing affordability as 30 percent or less of income. The H+T Index proposes expanding the definition of housing affordability to include transportation costs to better reflect the true cost of households' location choices. Based on research in metropolitan areas ranging from

large cities with extensive transit to small metropolitan areas with extremely limited transit options, CNT has found 15 percent of income to be an attainable goal for transportation affordability. By combining this 15 percent level with the 30 percent housing affordability standard, the H+T Index recommends a new view off affordability, one defined as combined housing and transportation costs consuming no more than 45 percent of household income.

For additional information on the tool and methodology, see the H+T Index website at <http://htaindex.cnt.org/>





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