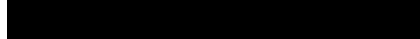


2007 ITE Student Paper Competition

Laura Stonehill



UC Berkeley  
Transportation Engineering & City Planning



### **Planning Experiences in Ohlone-Chynoweth Commons and Fruitvale Transit Village**

The Ohlone-Chynoweth Commons and the Fruitvale Transit Village are two examples of Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) in the Bay Area. The planning experiences for these two developments were influenced by a number of characteristics of these developments, including location, goals, land procurement, size, financing, and public participation.

#### **Location**

The Ohlone-Chynoweth Commons is a second generation TOD development in the suburbs of San Jose. The Fruitvale Transit Village, on the other hand, is an example of redevelopment in an urban location, in the city of Oakland. While both are located underutilized park-and-ride lots, the Ohlone-Chynoweth development is along the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Light Rail, on a line which runs with 10 min headways, while the Fruitvale Transit Village is located adjacent to the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Fruitvale Station. The size of the two developments is comparable, with the Ohlone-Chynoweth Commons at 7.3 acres, and the Fruitvale development at 5.3 acres. In both cases, the transit agency owned the land to be developed.

#### **Goals**

The goals of the two projects differ in that the Fruitvale Transit Village was planned as the cornerstone project for revitalizing the depressed Fruitvale district, while the Ohlone-Chynoweth Commons was not in as depressed an area, and had the goals of increasing transit ridership, and generating revenue, as well as enhancing the station area environment.

#### **Land Uses and Zoning**

Both the Ohlone-Chynoweth and Fruitvale TODs contain a mix of uses including retail, residential and community services. While the Ohlone-Chynoweth TOD contains 330 units of affordable housing, targeted to people making between 30% and 60% of the area median income, the Fruitvale Transit Village has a much smaller residential component, with only 67 units of affordable senior housing. Both developments have retail components and

community spaces such as a day care center at Ohlone-Chynoweth and a library, senior center, child care center, and health center at Fruitvale. Additionally, the Fruitvale Transit Village has a large plaza with a farmers' market and office space. In Fruitvale, a new zoning classification, TOD district, encourages balanced, mixed-use development and allows the highest residential densities in the city. Also, Fruitvale's location within an Empowerment Zone provides tax benefits to businesses/

Parking is also a component of both projects; Ohlone-Chynoweth has 240 park-and-ride spaces while Fruitvale has a new structured parking lot. In Fruitvale, parking was a key element, as the environmental assessment required that the development include a parking structure, and because without a provision for replacement parking, it is difficult for BART to transfer land. Historically, BART's "one-for-one" parking replacement policy has hampered its ability to engage in joint development deals. However, in this case, the city of Oakland created a special overlay zone for the Fruitvale district reducing the parking requirements by 50 percent- down to one space for every two units.

### **Financing**

The Ohlone-Chynoweth TOD had a total project cost of \$31.6 million, including \$14.5 million in tax-exempt bonds, \$10.5 million in tax credit equity, a \$5.2 million loan from the City to support affordable housing, \$824,000 in federal transportation funds for improvements, a \$500,000 Affordable Housing grant, and \$350,000 State Proposition 1 funds to reimburse the school fee. For this joint development project, the VTA issued a request for proposals seeking a developer and the City of San Jose used an expedited process for application review. At more than 3 times the cost, the Fruitvale TOD total cost was nearly \$100 million, with funding coming from more than 20 sources. This public/private project was mostly funded with public money including the Federal Transit Administration's first Livable Communities grant, funds from the city of Oakland, a HUD Section 108/EDI grant, and small grants. Private funding totaled \$20 million contributed by organizations and businesses including the Fort Foundation, the Levi-Strauss Foundation, and the PG&E Corporation. While needed to spread out the risks of redeveloping a declining retail district, multiple funding sources with their individual, and sometimes conflicting, requirements also served to complicate the negotiation and planning process.

### **Public participation**

Community involvement was part of both TOD projects, but took opposite forms. In Ohlone-Chynoweth it took the form of NIMBYism, while in Fruitvale, a powerful community group directly influenced the form of the development that was built. In Ohlone-Chynoweth, six homeowner associations concerned about the concentration and number of affordable housing units were able to stall the City Council's decision concerning the choice of developer several times. Eventually, the City Council determined that the community would benefit from the TOD's additional housing, community space, and retail uses, and approved the project over the concerns of its citizens. In Fruitvale, the TOD itself was the

brainchild of the community. The project was conceived by an active community group, the Unity Council, as part of a neighborhood alternative to BART's construction of an additional parking structure at the Fruitvale station. The community vision was of a more pedestrian-oriented village surrounding the station. BART agreed to work with the Unity Council-created Fruitvale Development Corporation (FDC) to build a TOD.

The Fruitvale Transit Village is a successful example of BART's community-friendly approach to joint development. Because of the community rebellion against BART's initial plan, the subsequent three years of community planning and visioning, and the grass-roots leadership of champions such as Arabella Martinez, the Unity Council's CEO, the Transit Village was built to meet the unique needs of the Fruitvale community. The public participation process in Fruitvale shows the need for proactive community input in station-area planning and serves as an example for other TODs.

### **Evaluation**

Both the Ohlone-Chynoweth and Fruitvale TODs have been deemed a success, for different reasons. Ohlone-Chynoweth is a nationally recognized, precedent-setting model for the type of development that promotes transit and pedestrian use. Even at a high density of 27 dwelling units per acre, it blends in well with the adjacent single-family neighborhood. It gets high ratings in terms of station design (6/8), pedestrian accessibility (3/4), and bicycle accessibility (2/4). In a successful TOD, vehicle ownership and use would be significantly lower in the station area than in the surrounding area. However, demographic data from 1990 and 2000 show only modest declines in vehicle ownership and use in the TOD. While the average number of vehicles per household is 11.6% lower in the station area than in sprawl conditions, there is no difference between the station area and the surrounding area. While the average annual VMT per household is 14.2% lower in the station area than in sprawl conditions, there is a less than 1% difference between the station area and the surrounding area.

The Fruitvale TOD has been evaluated more from a retail and economic point of view. Before the creation of the Transit Village, vacancies were as high as 40%, but now they are less than 1%. Through a Business Improvement Plan, property owners have agreed to tax themselves for street sweeping, cleaning and landscaping. The TOD has improved the economic situation of the neighborhood and has added several hundred new jobs to the area.

### **Suggestions**

These two TODs have been learning experiences for the agencies involved. Concerning the Ohlone-Chynoweth TOD, VTA staff say that if given the opportunity, they would do certain things differently, such as: offering local businesses that would be appropriate for the TOD reduced rent, spreading out small retail spaces along the street rather than clustering them at the station, creating direct paths to the surrounding neighborhood, and holding community meetings early in the process. Additionally, future TOD projects would benefit

from some provision for “institutional memory”- VTA staff who had previous experience developing a TOD were no longer with the agency when this TOD was proposed.

In Fruitvale, the Unity Council potentially faces a situation where improvements will drive up property values and increase taxes. In response it has begun buying, rehabilitating and selling homes at affordable houses.

In general, the lessons learned from these two TODs include: begin community relations early, offer incentives for businesses to relocate to TOD retail space, and make TOD accessible to the surrounding community. Concerning parking the special zoning is needed to reduce parking requirements even after BART has relaxed the one-to-one replacement parking requirement. Additionally, new developments should unbundle the cost of parking from rents to reduce auto ownership and use.

### **Resources**

1. [transitorienteddevelopment.dot.ca.gov](http://transitorienteddevelopment.dot.ca.gov)
2. Bay Area Economics-  
<http://www.bayareaeconomics.com/l2transit.htm#Fruitvale%20BART%20Transit%20Village%20Financial%20Analysis>
3. Valley Transportation Authority- <http://www.vta.org/projects/tod.html>
4. Bay Area Monitor- <http://www.bayareamonitor.org/oct00/devel.html>