

BEE RIDGE FORUM

Redesigning Our Neighborhood



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Why are we here?

Introduction

This pamphlet is intended to serve as a brief introduction and overview of smart growth, sustainable development, and the challenges facing the implementation of these types of development projects. We hope to provide you with a basic understanding of these issues in a format that is clear, informative and easy to understand. By focusing on Bee Ridge as a target for potential re-development, we aim to highlight the many potential benefits of sustainable re-development as well as the practical difficulties that a re-development project will have to overcome.

In the following sections, we

will start by looking at existing conditions along Bee Ridge Road in Sarasota, and the current framework of policy and development that have helped to create them. Next, we will examine some of the possible alternatives for re-development along Bee Ridge, including Transit-Oriented Development and plans for mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods. The following section addresses the importance of planning and the methods that can be used to create thriving economic destinations and vital community spaces. Finally, we conclude by detailing several case studies of other, comparable regions that have successfully implemented transit-based re-developments similar to what

could be accomplished here in Sarasota.

This pamphlet is meant to be accessible to readers with little or no previous knowledge about smart growth and sustainable urbanism. For readers who wish to learn more, we include an appendix, a bibliography and suggestions for further reading. We hope that you will find these resources helpful in providing a clear understanding of what smart growth is and why it is important.

Existing Conditions along the Bee Ridge Corridor

What is Sprawl?

Suburban sprawl is defined as random, unplanned growth characterized by inadequate accessibility to essential land uses such as housing, jobs and public services. It is undesirable for many reasons: it fosters our dependence on personal automobiles that are polluting our air and depleting our world's oil reserves; it requires a great

amount of land to be wasted or used to build parking lots; it creates uninteresting, unattractive landscapes and buildings with limited re-use value; it separates residents from one another and leaves few prospects for useful, attractive public spaces that help foster a sense of community.



The Effects of Unplanned Development

Bee Ridge Road, with its many residential neighborhoods and commercial destinations, has a lot of potential to be a thriving area of Sarasota. However, much of this potential is going unused. This is due in large part to the fact that Bee Ridge was built in pieces by uncoordinated developers with little or no consideration for the quality of the area as a whole. Take the intersection of Cattleman Road and Bee Ridge as an example. It is a major intersection between two large roads and is close by the I-75 onramp. Its large shopping center, The Centergate Plaza, is surrounded by single-family homes within easy walking distance. Unfortunately, despite its convenient proximity, the design of the intersection and the surrounding

area makes walking difficult, unpleasant, and even dangerous. The area is designed for cars, and pedestrians often find themselves in a losing battle against drivers. A pedestrian trying to cross Bee Ridge must wait for minutes for the light cycle to finish, and even still must be cautious when crossing to avoid the drivers turning right on a red light who are allowed pass through the crosswalk.

The long distance between potential destinations along Bee Ridge causes further problems for pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The stretch of highway primarily designed to transport large numbers of cars at high speeds makes few considerations for local resi-

dents who would not otherwise need to use their cars for a short trip to the store.

The landscape along Bee Ridge can also be very bland. Large parking lots dominate storefronts to let drivers know that there is ample parking available, and both sides of the road are lined with large signs, designed to catch the eye of someone traveling at 50 miles per hour.

Problems facing redevelopment



Zoning and Traffic Concurrency

Before any redevelopment can happen, there are some issues that must be overcome. First, zoning for mixed-use developments can be a serious difficulty. A county's zoning codes determine the acceptable uses of different areas, but outside of cities, zoning laws tend to only allow for single uses for any piece of land, such as residential, commercial, or industrial. Bee Ridge, for instance, is mostly zoned as a commercial and office development sector, surrounded by land zoned primarily for typical suburban single-family residences. As a result, it is very difficult to create any new development that combines both residential and commercial functions, despite the fact that mixed-use development is widely accepted as a positive alternative to the de facto sprawl of many of these areas.

Florida's state laws regarding traffic concurrency stand as another barrier to the re-development of areas such as Bee Ridge. The Florida Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Act of 1985 established regulations, which ensure that public facilities and services, including transportation, can support development.¹ The Florida Department of Community Affairs explains that concurrency laws require, "the adoption of level of service (LOS) standards, elimination of exist-

ing service deficiencies, and provision of infrastructure to accommodate new growth reflected in the comprehensive plan."² In other words, traffic concurrency regulations require that a developer prove that the necessary improvements will be made to maintain the established level of road service within three years of permitting of the development. Developers are required to help finance any changes to infrastructure that need to be made to maintain LOS, specifically for traffic concurrency this means updating infrastructure or even paving new roads.

One of the unintended consequences of concurrency laws has been to encourage developers to develop in rural areas. Since rural areas are much less congested than urban areas, it is much easier to meet minimum LOS standards by developing on the fringe. It is also often less expensive to pave new roads than to widen existing ones, especially in dense urban areas. Traffic concurrency plans often do not include alternative methods of transportation, such as buses or walking. In these ways, traffic concurrency laws contribute to our auto-dependence and to the continual spread of suburban sprawl into undeveloped areas.

However, there are some alternative methods that skirt the problems

associated with traffic concurrency laws. One particularly useful method that can be applied to Bee Ridge is the Planned Mixed-Use Infill (PMI) zoning district, a special type created to encourage the development of high-density, mixed-use communities in previously underutilized commercial areas. Sarasota County's Comprehensive Plan allows for areas, such as Bee Ridge, that have been targeted for re-development, to bypass zoning and concurrency restrictions and undertake a PMI development. Re-districting for PMI in Sarasota requires that a petition be submitted along with a plan for the new development. This plan must arise from a community-based planning event such as a charrette (which we will discuss in a later section), and must adhere to the standards laid out in Sarasota County's form-based code (see suggestions for further reading).

Existing re-districting options such as PMI allow developers interested in creating sustainable urban environments to work around building restrictions that are usually very rigid. These options reflect a commitment on the part of County government officials to promote sustainable development projects that will reduce sprawl, curb auto-dependency and create more varied, attractive and usable spaces.

Alternative Solutions

Transit Oriented Development: A New Paradigm

Transit-oriented development (TOD), a development pattern characterized by high density mixed-use development around transit stations, presents an alternative to business-as-usual development. This new model offers the potential for cost-effective infill, a move away from automobile dependency, and the retrofitting of tired places into thriving

communities where we can live, work, and play. The importance of creating transit nodes as livable and effective places for communities to flourish cannot be underestimated: the benefits are immense, spanning from individual happiness and comfort, to social equity and economic prosperity.

This highlights the importance of creating places that are walkable and friendly to non-automotive transportation, such as bikes and transit. TOD allows all needs to be met on foot, automobile dependency to be decreased, and vehicle ownership to instead become an individual choice rather than a limiting social factor. By developing sidewalks, bike paths, and nature trails that connect to the node, we create opportunities for people to be healthier while leading an easier life. Walkability means being able to satisfy your daily round, interact socially, and enjoy exercise and the natural environment on foot. Furthermore, the connectivity of nodes enables any need that is not available within your community to be met through transit.

Good nodes also work with nature as opposed to separating communities from it. The value of biophilia is immense, not only are there physical benefits but also psychological benefits. TOD presents the opportunity to create nature trails or bike paths that run between nodes and connections can be made that transcend the traditional image of transit by enabling recreational and outdoor enjoyment. Landscaping and proper fenestration (door and window placement) will provide for effective lighting, heating, and shade. Biophilia increases happiness and property values.⁵ By creating high density TOD nodes that offer a mix of uses, walkability, and well-designed greenspace, we can develop places that create effective communities.

Connecting the Nodes

TOD creates the opportunity to construct what Scott Bernstein calls the “home-base,” or livable communities for residents and work oriented communities for business and service providers.¹ This format risks suffering from a tension of being both a living space and a transit station. Dittmarr and Ohland explain that such tension can be eased by creating places that meet daily needs, provide entertainment, employment opportunities, a general mix of uses, and are effectively designed to accommodate both the grandeur of certain kinds of transit while maintaining an effective living space.² To accomplish this “place-making,” Peter Caltorphe has offered the idea of building “human-scale,” which suggests “a strong neighborhood focus and environment that encourages everyday interaction.”³ TOD nodes should be designed to have somewhat concealed and streamlined transit stations surrounded by human-scale building centered on the principles of mixed use, high density, walkability, and biophilia (interaction

with nature). In doing so, transit nodes resolve the tension between station and place and create livable communities that people want to live and work in.

When creating TOD nodes that function as strong places, compact high-density development is the first priority. Compactness saves lands from being developed under the current unsustainable scheme and also increases the convenience and value of relationships within the neighborhood. For instance, local service providers, such as coffee shops, will garner customer loyalty. The satisfaction of the daily round can be easily met when high density enables economic prosperity and local business success. High density enables transportation to prosper, since ridership increases as transit quality increases in high-density areas. Additionally, “sidewalks and close quarters typical of urban neighborhoods encourage sociability.”⁴ High-density nodes create social situations and the opportunity to maintain relationships.

In fact, the empty-nesters of the baby boom generation are finding the large lot low density housing of the suburbs to be unsuitable for childless life, hence they have “fueled much of the down town population growth over the past decade, as they seek smaller homes” nearby “a greater mix of amenities.”⁶ Also, it has been shown that it costs approximately \$50,000 more per dwelling unit to satisfy these basic utility and living needs in an undeveloped area, as opposed to the cost of infill development.⁷ Overall, effective transit oriented development nodes create places in which people would want to live, places that benefit the people in them, and the economy and environment beyond.

Designing the Modes

All four modes of transportation (mass transit, car use, biking, and walking) serve distinct and overlapping purposes and carry different advantages and disadvantages that require balancing. Cars, for instance, can take users long distances quickly. Car trips offer door-to-door service, but also are expensive and do not benefit all users in the same way. Children, teenagers, and elderly people, for instance, may not be allowed or able to drive safely. Driving imposes heavy financial costs (registration, maintenance, insurance, and purchase price) that not all populations can feasibly shoulder. Additionally, it can be stressful and dangerous.⁹

Mass transit offers an effective way of traveling long distances for a small cost, and can be easily used by a wider variety of commuters. However, without sufficient investment and attention to transit services, transit is not always convenient, attractive, or effective for daily use. Biking, walking, or moving by a wheelchair are also low cost and universal transportation options which have the added benefit of improving our personal fitness. (Moderate physical activity has been widely shown to reduce obesity and diabetes risk. Moderate exercise for about 2.5 hours a week has been shown to reduce type 2 diabetes by 58%.¹⁰) Yet, when the different places we would like to go are not located within or close to our neighborhood, or when walking to a destination requires crossing unsafe places, walking alongside heavy and fast moving traffic, or across un-shaded hard asphalt surfaces, walking and biking can be uncomfortable and risky.

These drawbacks relate closely to how our urban and suburban spaces are designed. Transit-oriented development, in seeking to balance these various modes of transportation reduces drawbacks and accentuates the positive

aspects associated with these options. TOD calms down traffic and reduces reliance on cars. It expands mass transit and makes biking and walking safer and more enjoyable. While the importance of balancing these modes is easy to grasp, how this balance might actually be achieved isn't immediately self-evident. The following describes how specific TOD design elements interact with transportation options.



Bus Rapid Transit

Major investments from the Federal Transit Administration flow through a program called "New Starts". Hundreds of metropolitan areas around the country have already benefited from New Starts and dozens more are currently applying. The funding supports "locally-planned, implemented, and operated transit" guideways.¹¹ "Guideway" refers to heavy, light, or commuter rail and bus rapid transit—all modes of fixed-route transit.

While the FTA may approve extensions to existing guideways fairly quickly, the review of applications for cities vying for a new guideway can span several years. The process goes through three steps: define the possible routes and assess design issues (Alternatives Analysis and Preliminary Engineering); affirm that the new guideway will improve mobility, benefit the environment, operate efficiently and economically,

and coordinate with the existing land use plan (Project Justification); and prove that the metropolitan area is willing and able to pay for much of the new transit system (Local Financial Commitment). Transit systems often find financial backing from a variety of sources, public and private, and many of these stakeholders will have some influence in the design once the engineering begins.

Sarasota County completed the Alternatives Analysis for their New Starts

application in September 2008. The optimal mode for the county is a Bus Rapid Transit (or BRT), and though the assessment of its viability continues, the likelihood of its approval looks great. A BRT operates differently from a regular bus system, like the current Sarasota County Area Transit bus system. BRT attempts to function more like mass transit: they generally focus on one or two lines which connect the busiest hubs of activity in a city. They choose the route in

terms of which will prove the most fruitful in improving mobility (ideally collecting commuters to employment centers) and convert the most car trips into transit trips. Federal funding for transit systems are contingent upon ridership numbers—the more riders, the more money. BRT systems focus on delay reduction: all the waiting (real or imagined) involved in transit systems promises to be the most stubborn impediment keeping drivers in their cars. Though they operate through buses, BRT lines aim for Light Rail-type service. A bus arrives at each transit stop every 10 or 15 minutes; through underground signaling, buses receive signal priority at stoplights; and buses often earn their own lanes or "busways." Our current SCAT system, by contrast, claims 30 minutes as its quickest waiting window and must wait like all other traffic at stoplights. By providing quality service to specific corridors, a BRT line can actu-

ally spur economic development to create enterprising transit nodes at busy bus stops.

Branding of new BRT systems can allow this distinct transit option to avoid the poor reputation of existing bus systems and transcend the general repulsion from bus riding many middle class Americans feel. Examples abound of innovative designs to make BRT systems convenient and trendy. Orlando, Florida's BRT, called the Lymmo system, has worked to cater to a public weary of buses. It offers its passengers,

free bus rides throughout the downtown area on three miles of dedicated lanes. Ten low-floor buses fueled by environmentally-friendly compressed natural gas run every 5 minutes during working hours, every 10 minutes after hours, and every 15 minutes on weekends between eleven lighted and computerized Lymmo stations and eight additional stops. Service is fast because low-floor buses speed passenger loading, even for passengers with wheelchairs, and because signal priority for buses at intersections insures that traffic does not interfere with bus operations. Electronic kiosks at stations show passengers the location and expected arrival time of the next bus.¹²

Orlando's Lymmo will be discussed further in the case study section.

The map at right shows the route that has been chosen as the tentative BRT line for Sarasota County's New Starts application, beginning at the airport and going south through downtown to Siesta Drive. Each gray dot along the yellow line is a bus stop. The section of the line that is bordered in red indicates devoted "busway" that would be converted from the rarely-used railroad that currently runs there. If approved, the BRT would be an asset to any Transit Oriented Development nodes on Bee Ridge Rd.

Walking and Biking

Walking can be a way of enriching community life. Walking and biking in urban and suburban environments are most attractive when there are places we would like to go located near each other with visually interesting places through

which to travel. TOD emphasizes mixed-use development and ensures that commercial development contributes to street life by adjoining storefronts--rather than parking lots--to sidewalks and by giving preference to small scale retail and service providers over big-box options. At the level of a neighborhood or district, TOD seeks to maintain a diversity of building uses in order to expand pedestrian access to various services.

Along with providing close-by and desirable destinations, TOD also designs walking and bike routes so they are navigable and pleasant. Sidewalks that suddenly end, are heavily cracked or blocked with poles, or run adjacent to fast-moving traffic make walking difficult. Traffic signals that do not give pedestrians enough time to cross the street, insufficient ramps for wheelchairs and stroller accommodations, lack of bicycle parking, a lack of benches or sitting areas, the presence of litter, insufficient lighting and inadequate shade or overhead shelter all have similarly discouraging effects.¹³ TOD calls for wide sidewalks to accommodate multiple users, including pets, strollers, and wheelchairs. It slows down traffic and by providing dedicated transit, bike lanes, and street side parking, TOD protects pedestrian walkways from traffic.

Car Use

Transit-oriented development incorporates automobiles more responsibly rather than oust them entirely. There are two main dimensions for thinking about the role of cars in TOD: traffic management and parking provision. TOD generally calms down traffic and buffers it from pedestrian walkway, through such techniques as lowering speed limits, adding roundabouts to intersections, reducing lanes and redesigning high-speed street angles. Traffic calming does not necessarily reduce traveling time or increase traffic jams. It disciplines driving, rendering it safer. Generally traffic is spread among multiple routes instead of being concentrated along single streets and carries less volume in TODs due to traditional car users choosing other transportation options.

Parking can disrupt the pedestrian experience and decrease road and

buildable area. Walking alongside seas of storefront parking fields hardly lends itself to window gazing or feeling comfortable while on the street. Along with the aesthetic displeasures associated with parking lots are financial drawbacks (the average cost constructing and maintaining a single street side parking space is about \$5,000) and environmental issues (excessive impermeable surface interferes with and overtakes storm water drainage facilities).¹⁴ Generally, parking supply in suburban environments far exceeds demand. This excess is the result of overly conservative and rigid parking requirements that mandate parking provision on the basis of square footage associated with different building uses without recognizing possibilities for sharing parking supply or how parking needs vary according to context.¹⁵

Sufficient parking and smart traffic management remain integral components of high functioning built environments. Moreover, balancing transportation options contributes to our experiences of built environments and community life. The design of neighborhoods and districts can help achieve this balance.



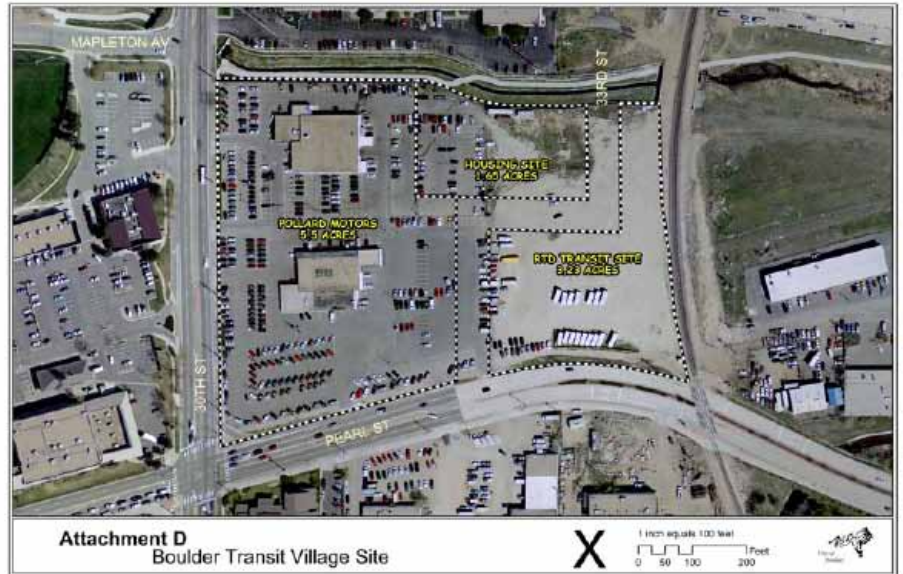
Planning

What is it?

The process of development planning, at its most basic levels, comes from groups of citizens working together to improve the places they live in and value. Planning as a practice can take place on many different scales. New urbanism, a type of planning, emphasizes dense, mixed-use development that is both pedestrian friendly, and well-served by mass transit. The goal of planning is to increase the physical beauty of an area, to create more pedestrian spaces, to provide the basis for a more cohesive sense of community, and to lay a solid foundation for future growth. Comprehensive planning takes its cues from the successes of other vital urban communities and attempts to create new, thriving developments. Planners, in conjunction with citizens and businesses, produce a vision for the future and the blueprints for new communities.

Types of Planning

New Urbanist planners champion a system of development known as 'mixed use'. A mixed-use development is characterized by the proximity of residential and commercial spaces to one another, promoting interconnectedness and vitality in a community. They often base their designs on successful communities already extant in U.S. cities. In addition, mixed use developments allow for easy pedestrian access to hubs of social and commercial activity, eliminating problems of traffic congestion. There are two main arguments against the use of citizen planning based initiatives. The first is in favor of using the free market to determine how cities are built. A second argument analyzes the problems of top down initiatives in connection to government planning, complementing the critique that free markets should control a region's organization.



Free market planning lets the market dictate patterns of development. This idea has its origins in free market economics: "A free market economy is one where scarcities are resolved through changes in relative prices rather than through regulation"². Instead of scarcities, there is development; changes in prices become changes in places, designs, and codes. In conjunction with the argument for free market planning are some cons to the top down initiatives that are indicative of government backed planning. Top down initiatives do not create choices, the free market does based on opportunity costs and the amount one is willing to pay. Despite some of the democratic processes associated with creating a regional plan, government backed planning is not infallible. For example, when residential regulations are imposed, housing availability decreases and prices are pushed up.

These arguments do not stand up in the face of experience, however. There are many cases of failed attempts at development when the free market principles have been given free reign.

Comprehensive planning has proven to be much more successful in creating healthy, vital and lasting developments which benefit the communities that they were designed around.

It is important not only to discuss the importance of comprehensive planning, but how successful comprehensive planning is done. In a successful development, it is necessary to have both skilled organizers who are willing to listen to the communities they are working with and community members who are willing to participate in the design of a new development that will directly affect the way they live their lives.

The Charrette Process

The most successful design system that is currently used to involve professionals and community members on several levels of the design process is the design charrette. There are several different types of design charrette, but they all follow similar principles in the methods they use and the ways they are organized. According to the Department of Transportation¹⁸, a charrette involves the following general steps:

- definition of issues to be resolved;
- analysis of the problem and alternative approaches to solutions;
 - assignment of small groups to clarify issues;
- use of staff people to find supporting data;
- development of proposals to respond to issues;
- development of alternative solutions;
- presentation and analysis of final proposal(s); and
- consensus and final resolution of the approach to be taken.

These basic steps outline an intensive process which can take several days. It gives both individual citizens and interested groups the opportunity to voice their feelings regarding the developments which will directly affect them. It is usually organized by an expert in charrette design; it is the responsibility of the charrette leader to bring in as many interested parties as possible, and to encourage them to voice their opinions, generating the most well-represented design possible. It is also his/her responsibility to ensure that the resources are properly allocated from the planning and design staff. The use of skilled professionals to both assess the logistical necessities of proposed design solutions and to generate possible outcomes which would come from those solutions which the participants in the charrette can interpret are very important parts of the process, and part of what has made it so efficient and successful.

Some of the arguments against detailed planning have already been laid out, but the essential necessity of allowing citizens to have a voice in the creation of their living

spaces is clear. Looking at the current state of affairs is a clear demonstration of why it is necessary to have not only citizen involvement, but to have a specific and detailed design plan for any development. Without it, sprawling ugly and unregulated developments have sprung up, and now there are large parts of the Bee Ridge corridor that will be completely impossible to re-design; those parts that can still be re-developed will face serious challenges in doing so. Thus, this demonstration of how planning can be put together successfully is important to move forward with the process.

Case Studies



To better understand the process of creating a transit-oriented development, some of the challenges associated with it, and the advantages it provides for communities, we've examined three separate case studies. First, in Orlando, Orange County improved their bus system by setting aside roads and prioritizing traffic lights in order to make the system more conducive to public use. Second, Boulder, Colorado shows how a small city can remake and revitalize their bus system, paving the way for a promising future transit oriented development. Finally, Arlington County, Virginia's efforts redeveloping an older commercial corridor turned into one of the most successful transit oriented developments in the nation, providing an ideal model for what this type of development can bring to Sarasota.

Orlando, Florida

The Bee Ridge Corridor is not a particularly unique place to be re-developed based on TOD principles. In fact, as a mixed-use corridor that connects a state road to an interstate highway, it is nearly identical to the corridors in Orlando. Orlando's bus regional transit system, Lynx, has a subdivision of busses called 'Lymmo'. The Lymmo system has its own dedicated lanes and stoplight system, making it more efficient, reliable, and less likely to increase congestion than traditional bus systems. The system only operates within a few blocks of the epicenter of downtown. It thus fixed a multitude of problems in downtown Orlando, including general traffic congestion,

parking, and navigation along the poorly designed streets. On top of all of this, the Lymmo service is completely free to commuters. Given the problems with Bee Ridge, implementing an alternative version of this Lymmo system could do wonders for encouraging re-development in positive new ways.

Orlando is also embracing responsible transit development through the development of the SunRail, a system of commuter rail transit and light rail transit to provide more efficient and environmentally friendly transit for the citizens of Orlando. The SunRail runs north and south on 61 miles of existing rail freight tracks over four counties. Although SunRail is not up yet, the first phase of its operation should be finished by 2011, and phase two of the operation should be finished by 2013. Additional features of the SunRail include a proposed light rail system stretched across 22 miles connecting Altamonte Springs (the heart of the outlying northern suburbs of Orlando) with southern Orange County, the southern part of downtown, as well as being in close proximity to Lake Buena Vista and the Disney area. The SunRail is intended to ease traffic along the Interstate 4 corridor and promote TODs, along providing all of the economic and environmental benefits associated with responsible mass transit.

The Lymmo system and the SunRail both stand as sources of inspiration for redevelopment along the Bee Ridge corridor and Sarasota in general. Though the two city's situations are not identical, the efforts are parallel enough for us to learn much.

Boulder, Colorado

Boulder is a particularly interesting case study to use when discussing potential development in Sarasota. Though Boulder has a larger population than Sarasota, it still does not have the population or urban density to support intensive transit like subway systems. However, for transit to efficiently serve its current suburban layout, Boulder does have a highly functional, well-used bus system and promotes a biking culture. This sets the stage for its plans for a future of more efficient transit-oriented development.

Between 1990 to 2002 transit ridership on the Boulder bus system increased from 5,000 average daily riders to 26,000. This is equivalent to one-fourth of the city's population riding the bus on any given day, much higher than most cities in America. For Boulder to make its bus system such a popular alternative, the city re-marketed it in the early 1990s so that it would be more customer-friendly. To reach all areas with efficient and easy-to-remember routes, the system has seven diesel-hybrid bus lines that all travel along straight or circular paths. Each line has its own identity with a catchy name (Hop, Skip, and Jump are examples), logo, and graphics appealing to "Boulder Flair". The most popular lines run every 7-10 minutes, from 7am to 7pm. At times before/after this (and on less popular lines), buses visit the stations every 15-30 minutes. This makes it easier for people to ride without having to plan out elaborate schedules and make complicated transfers between lines.

Additionally, Boulder offers Eco-Passes for businesses in its downtown and business improvement districts, which employers can buy for their employees to encourage ridership. Employees, in return, get a photo ID and unlimited rides on all regular bus lines. Not only is this beneficial to both employees and the community, but Boulder advertises this as good for businesses. Riding free, convenient transit—in addition to being more reliable and less stressful than driving cars in rush traffic—will help increase productivity of a company by reducing stress, lateness, and absenteeism in employees. Along with this, companies can expand their recruitment pool to include

skilled employees that would not otherwise commute. By decreasing parking, businesses will also have increased property values and more land to expand on.

An alternative Eco Pass program with similarly successful results is NECO, the Neighborhood Eco Pass. When a neighborhood buys into a contract for Eco Passes, households in the neighborhood get a discounted price ranging from \$63-\$143 based on zones for unlimited trips. To put this in perspective, the average family in the automobile-dominated suburbia of West Central Florida region spends an estimated \$10,500 on transportation annually to transport each family member to separate jobs, errands, and recreational activities. The NECO pass program allows households to buy into and help sustain transit in Boulder for a tenth of the cost of buying into an automobile-dominated region. Thirty-three neighborhoods currently participate in this program.

For a portion of the other three-fourths of the population, Boulder is also an easy city to bike in. It has 381 miles of bike trails, seamlessly connecting virtually every part of the city. It uses techniques like bike overpasses, separate lanes for bikes, contra-flow lanes where bikes can travel against the flow of traffic, and curb-butting. The aforementioned bus systems also accommodate bikes with racks. Bike encouragement programs in schools, numerous biking clubs, and a general biking culture also help promote this alternative transportation method. Boulder was also awarded the "Platinum"-level Bicycle Friendly Community Award by the League of American Bicyclists in 2009, an award that only 2 other cities in the country have received.

This existing transit set the stage for Boulder to plan a "Transit Village." A mixed-use, higher-density area that aims to promote transit and "sense of place," this Village is based on TOD principles. To make transit more available and more broadly useful, a future Bus Rapid Transit hub going to Denver will run through the Village, as well as a commuter railroad service to Denver. This will connect more people from Denver to stimulate the commercial area, and allow Boulder residents to commute to or visit Denver easier. Along with higher density and transit mobility, the plan will break

the area down into more "fine-grained" streets and paths to make it pedestrian- and bike- friendly. A north-south street will connect the different transportation facilities and will fraction off into a multi-use path connecting the Village to Goose Creek Greenway, a public park.

The Village will have 8 character districts based on use; these different zones will range from office-industrial to high density residential, with most zones including mixed-uses between residential and industrial/commercial development. All in all, it will create a projected 2900-4300 new jobs, economic growth, more affordable housing with access to the amenities that TOD offers, as well as a fun, distinctive place to shop and socialize. The city plans to give economic incentives to promote local businesses, though it may incorporate one or two "mid-box" retailers (down-sized version of normal big-box stores) to "serve community-level retail needs". Additionally, this development will help correct the housing disparity in Boulder, which employs significantly more people than it can house. The Transit Village will allow workers who previously commuted into Boulder to live in the city, in one of the 1400-2400 new housing units that will be created.¹⁰

Boulder has effectively promoted transit and biking to the point that they are now valid alternatives to cars; this was not a city that started out with high-densities that necessitated public transit and walkable streets. On the contrary, Boulder adapted transit to work with its existing layout while promoting future transit-oriented development. With its residential neighborhoods, lower densities, and existing bus system, Sarasota could definitely learn from Boulder. Remarketing and reworking the bus system to make it more visually appealing, more exciting, and easier to use will help people view riding the bus as a fun, efficient novelty.

Arlington, Virginia

In northern Virginia, Arlington County's efforts towards creating and sustaining walkable communities and easily-accessible transit are particularly noteworthy. Some of the most striking examples of successfully implemented, thriving transit oriented developments

exist in Arlington's Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor. Located just across the Potomac from Washington, D.C., Arlington was largely a commuter suburb that began to quickly expand in the years after World War II.

Arlington County chose Wilson Boulevard, a three mile long strip which linked the commercial center of Rosslyn, sitting near Georgetown, to another commercial center, Ballston for major redevelopment in the late 1960s. This stretch of road had never been incorporated into any town, and mostly consisted of decaying street-front retail, shopping centers, and the occasional single-family home. Major retailers, department stores, and grocery chains were leaving steadily, and, "between 1972 and 1980, the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor lost more than eleven thousand residents, 36.4 percent of its population." However, its proximity to Washington made it an ideal location to capitalize on the expanding Metrorail subway system.

Five stations were ultimately built, spaced less than a mile apart, as the main nodes in the new subway system. In the quarter mile around each of these transit stations, the county allowed for extremely high densities to spur on growth and development as part of their General Land Use Plan. In order to be permitted to build at these densities, though, developers had to enter into negotiations with County officials, and were typically required to pay for infrastructure improvements, like sidewalks, traffic signals, and street trees, in return for the permit. This type of development creates a "bulls-eye" effect, with densities smoothly tapering down to accommodate single-family, suburban homes just half a mile away.

Over the process of thirty years of development, county officials maintained a clear set of goals. They sought to "encourage mixed-use development, focus on good architecture and urban design, reinforce the unique character of each station area, and clearly demarcate the high-density transit zones from surrounding low-density residential areas." This general commitment to the principles of transit oriented development was combined with specific planning focused on giving each of the five stations unique identities: "Rosslyn as a major business and employment center; Court House as

Notes

From Existing Conditions

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