



# EDA Update



Volume 2; Issue 7

## EDA RECOVERY WEBSITE NOW LIVE

EDA's hub for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) information is now live. Find Federal Funding Opportunities, agency reports and other essential links. Visit <http://www.eda.gov/Recovery> today!

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## The Track to Prosperity: Transit Oriented Development in East St. Louis

Communities across the nation are increasingly attempting to achieve sustainability by encouraging transit oriented design, often called transit oriented development, or TOD. More than siting housing near or around transit, TOD serves as a means to provide greater accessibility and mobility options for residents and users while incorporating retail and other commercial uses for increased employment access and enhanced economic opportunity.

By locating in close proximity to a MetroLink light rail extension, the Emerson Park Development Corporation's (EPDC) Parsons Place residential development helped broaden economic opportunity for residents of the East St. Louis region. This compelling example of TOD is helping to strengthen community stability by offering a greater sense of place for residents as they strive to achieve economic self-sufficiency and build a sustainable regional economy.

EPDC, a community development corporation (CDC) with roots in the East St. Louis area since 1985, was established by a group of concerned citizens with a mission to improve the quality of life for residents of Alorton, Brooklyn, Cahokia, Centreville, East St. Louis and Washington Park areas of Illinois. EPDC promotes three core areas of economic development to address community needs: 1) job and training programs; 2) community building; and 3) housing development. Parsons Place is one example of how EPDC incorporated thoughtful economic development that links the community with better transit options, greater job access and more economic stability.

Parsons Place is the largest private rental development built in East St. Louis in several decades. Phase I, which opened in 2002, consists of 174 mixed-income rental units and more than half of the units are reserved for families earning less than 50–60 percent of the area median income. Phase II opened in 2005 and offers over 100 additional units, 75 percent of which are reserved for lower-income families. The nearby Emerson Park MetroLink light rail station provides residents with a gateway to the entire St. Louis metro area and St. Clair County.

Current East St. Louis Mayor Alvin Parks speaks very highly of Emerson Park and Parsons Place and how the new development has transformed his community and spurred other redevelopment projects. "Parsons Place is the single-most outstanding East St. Louis housing development in the last 40 years," notes Mayor Parks. "We've taken what was once a blighted, derelict, empty area and added vibrancy to East St. Louis." The mayor adds "this is a very good example of economic development through TOD, since the Emerson Park MetroLink station is almost in the middle of the development. Visitors now know that change is possible in East St. Louis."

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### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Do you have a story idea, case study or topic that you would like to see covered in this newsletter? Do you want to comment on something you read here? [Email us](#) and your comment or idea could be featured in the next EDA Update!

### APA's Tools-of-the-Trade Part Six: Strategy 5 – Workforce and Education Training

State, regional and local governments can facilitate workforce development through business incentives and training incubators. APA's Tools-of-the-Trade ([Website](#)) features a variety of strategies, such as on-site job and soft skills trainings, online coursework, and community college trainings and workshops.

### Federal Funding Opportunity Notice Available for EDA's American Recovery Program

EDA is soliciting applications under its \$150 million American Recovery Act Program, to create jobs and boost development in parts of the country hit hard by the recession. The deadline for receipt of applications under the Recovery Act Program is June 30, 2010. All other information and requirements for the EDA American Recovery Act Program may be found in the March 10, 2009, *Federal Register* notice (74 FR 10232) and the companion federal funding opportunity announcement on EDA's Recovery [Website](#).

### COMING SOON!

#### June 29–August 1, 2009

American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) Annual Conference, Raleigh, NC  
[\[Website\]](#)

#### August 29–September 1, 2009

NADO's 2009 Annual Training Conference, Chicago, IL  
[\[Website\]](#)

#### September 14–26, 2009

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) played a significant role in helping erase the community disinvestment that plagued East St. Louis for decades. EDA invested \$1 million in the Emerson Park security and commercial building, which opened in 2003 and houses Metro and St. Clair County security forces and reinforced safety and security in the neighborhood. EDA funding was used for infrastructure, lighting and construction of ancillary roads that feed the station. Additional funding was provided by the county.

Strategic partnerships were instrumental in the development of Parsons Place. A forward-thinking developer, McCormack Baron Salazar, was awarded the Phase I and II design contract for the residential development. Part of the firm's mission was to work with a local community group or a CDC to drive the project forward. CDCs generally have a solid foothold in the community with established trust among residents, and this was true for EPDC. It was evident that broader transit options were needed in the community; with MetroLink bisecting both sides of Parsons Place, residents are able to access employment opportunities in and around the TOD network more efficiently.

Additionally, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign—a fixture in the East St. Louis region for decades—contributed to the Parsons Place development through the East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP). ESLARP, an organization of University faculty, staff and students who work on highly tangible and visible projects that address immediate and long-term needs of the East St. Louis Community, assessed community needs during the project's development phases and participated in community outreach to garner more input from residents about the planned development.

The Parsons Place residential development uniquely demonstrates how communities and regions can thrive from TOD networks. Here are some lessons learned from this best practice example of TOD:

- TOD employs greater connectivity throughout cities and regions, thereby sharing workforces and expanding skill sets;
- TOD can bridge economic opportunities by encouraging greater access to employment through multiple modes of transportation, and not solely relying upon automobiles;
- Strategic partnerships among stakeholders can help facilitate the development of a TOD network as well as encourage community input and public participation; and
- Thanks to their emphasis on stimulating investments in distressed communities, federal programs from EDA or HUD Empowerment Zones can help communities bring TOD projects to neighborhoods with the greatest need.

Improving communities by reinvesting in the residents is a fundamental part of economic development. Parsons Place is an example of how TOD can promote economic opportunity within a historically disenfranchised community.

For more information about the Emerson Park Development Corporation and Parsons Place visit <http://www.emersonpark.org/>.

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## Transit Oriented Development in Real Life

Urban planners have long advocated for transit oriented development (TOD) as a way to build more sustainable communities. While most city leaders have agreed that TOD was the right thing to do in theory, they often had trouble introducing these concepts in practice as many citizens and community leaders were reluctant to change old development patterns.

Fortunately, that picture is now changing. More communities—and their leaders—embrace TOD as a key component of community sustainability, vitality and prosperity. A new report from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)—an organization dedicated to helping community residents transform distressed neighborhoods—and Reconnecting America—a non-profit organization working to integrate transportation systems and the communities they serve—profiles many examples of local TOD projects. The study examines a number of different strategies such as new ways to manage parking, fund housing development and manage local zoning disputes.

New strategies for automobile parking are an important but often neglected TOD approach. Parking is often a huge cost in new development projects, with expenses ranging from \$20,000 per space up to \$60,000 per space in high cost areas like San Francisco. If developers can reduce parking demand, funds can be released for other purposes, such as providing affordable

National Association of Seed and Venture Funds (NASVF) 16th Annual Convention, Oklahoma City, OK [[Website](#)]

### September 14–17, 2009

America's Small Business Development Center (ASBDC) Annual Conference, Orlando, FL [[Website](#)]

### October 4–7, 2009

IEDC 2009 Annual Conference, Renewable Communities, Reno, NV [[Website](#)]

### October 11–13, 2009

University Economic Development Association Annual Summit, San Antonio, TX [[Website](#)]

housing or other kinds of amenities. Some new parking strategies are relatively simple. For example, shared parking encourages multiple users to share parking spaces, so that a business uses parking spots for its workers during the week, but opens its lots to visitors or local shoppers on the weekend. By implementing this strategy, the city of Long Beach, California, was able to finance a major hotel project that has helped revitalize its downtown district.

Many communities are also crafting new public–private partnerships to help spur development in key locations, especially around train stations and other major transportation hubs. For example, in Boston, the city government and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority are collaborating with private developers who have agreed to build a new Silver Line station in South Boston as part of a larger World Trade Center complex. The Washington, DC, area has also embraced this model by partnering to support development at several local Metro stations, such as the station in Bethesda, Maryland.

All of these innovations share several characteristics:

- First, successful projects are not simply about physical space or infrastructure. Instead, zoning or planning decisions are closely related to other community and economic development objectives. Thus, by reforming parking programs, cities can free up funds for affordable housing or other purposes.
- Second, a mix of players must be engaged. These include planners, economic developers, business leaders and local residents.
- Finally, nearly every project relies on some type of creative or innovative financing methods. In today's tight budget environment, even with new Federal stimulus money, resources to test new ideas are limited. As such, community leaders must seek new sources of financing to effectively back TOD projects.

To access the 2009 Local Initiatives Support Corporation report, Case Studies in Transit Oriented Development, visit <http://www.lisc.org/content/publications/detail/8185>

Reconnecting America [www.reconnectingamerica.org](http://www.reconnectingamerica.org)

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## Transit Oriented Development in Mexico: Rail Runner Express Albuquerque to Santa Fe

The Rail Runner Express, a commuter train line that runs between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico, has utilized a strategic transit oriented development approach to meet the needs of commuters and the communities that the rail line services.

Phase I began in 2006, with the Rail Runner using an existing track that ran between Belen (about 30 miles south of Albuquerque) and Bernalillo County. Phase II, which was completed in December 2008, extended the service through Albuquerque to Santa Fe. The rail line was developed after an assessment highlighted it would reduce congestion and improve transportation and quality of life factors for over 50 percent of New Mexico's population. Additionally, planners noted the potential for the Rail Runner Express to also bring investment and development to the various communities along the line.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) and the Mid–Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) are responsible for developing the Rail Runner. MRCOG serves as the lead agency for implementation of the rail service and manages the development around each of the stations.

MRCOG has partnered with community leaders around each of the stations as well as private companies, development entities and local governments. The partnerships have afforded the communities with various opportunities for economic growth and reinvestment. Communities and MRCOG are looking to build mixed use developments which will provide residential and commercial opportunities as well as parks and public use facilities. Businesses that serve the commuters (coffee shops, magazine stands, etc) have also taken shape in these once underserved and often deserted areas.

The track represents an underutilized, valuable asset in the heart of many of these communities that can once again stimulate local economies. MRCOG recognized that efficient transportation is vital to any healthy economy. The Rail Runner Express was developed not only to reduce congestion and carbon emissions, but also to better connect employers with employees.

The MRCOG plan proposes the creation of two districts: the mixed-use core and the station area. The mixed-use core is the area immediately surrounding the station and includes two-three story buildings with a mix of retail and housing to create activity throughout the day in order to support local businesses and keep streets safe and attractive. The station area is the transition zone between the mixed-use core and the existing neighborhoods/communities to maintain a seamless continuity between the old and new.

MRCOG is assisting local governments in determining how the Rail Runner can help meet their current and future goals. Three plans have been developed so far for Bernalillo, Los Lunas and Bernalillo County/Sunport in Albuquerque's South Valley.

Additionally, in the Belen to Santa Fe corridor, station sites are located in or near the traditional downtown areas of the communities. The town of Bernalillo for example, is working on integrating the proposed station site into their main-street redevelopment program. Belen is pursuing a similar course of action with their "Heart of Belen" Becker Street revitalization project.

In a September 14, 2004 news story in the *Albuquerque Journal*, Belen officials recognized that the commuter rail service would be an important component of their downtown revitalization plans. The commuter rail service provides another dimension of activity and transport that is very consistent with redevelopment objectives. Rail service is also seen by many as a quality-of-life issue and asset that can be marketed to prospective businesses considering a move or start-up to the region.

As more and more employees now live outside the communities in which they work, efficient *regional* transportation systems are essential to future economic growth. Passenger rail services can provide broad-reaching economic benefits through improved safety, lower transportation costs and enhanced development opportunities at rail station sites. In other parts of the country, new passenger rail systems have increased regional employment, business activity and productivity. In each community, new rail stations have become centers of activity, stimulating economic growth and rising property values in the area.

For more information visit MRCOG at: <http://www.mrcog-nm.gov/>



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