

Communities By Design, a
nonprofit 501c(3) training and education
organization, in cooperation with the
City of Redwood City,
is pleased to present:

The Forum *at Redwood City*

A CONTINUING CONVERSATION ON CITY DESIGN



Place Making with Transit and Transit-Oriented Development

2007-08 SEASON: FORUM #3
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2007
BIG FOX THEATER
2209 BROADWAY
REDWOOD CITY
6:00 P.M. - 7:45 P.M.

On December 5, 2007, the City of Redwood City and the nonprofit “Communities by Design” held the third presentation of the 2007-2008 Forum season. The Forum featured a presentation by **GB Arrington** (Principal Practice Leader, PB PlaceMaking, Portland, OR) on “Place Making with Transit and Transit-Oriented Development.” Mr. Arrington is internationally recognized as a leader in Transit-Oriented Development. Prior to joining PB, he charted a new, award-winning direction for Portland, Oregon’s transit agency.

According to Mr. Arrington, successful Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) requires more than just the siting of residential or office developments next to a transit stop. Mr. Arrington explained that successful TOD projects create a place worth staying in by providing physical connectivity, an engaging pedestrian experience and minimized automobile-orientation. Successful TOD developments require the removal of a number of existing physical, financial, market, regulatory and political barriers. Mr. Arrington explained the following key principles for removing these barriers:

“The fundamentals of
TOD are about great
neighborhoods.”

-GB Arrington

Private investment follows public commitment.

Public support for TOD projects is critical. Once public support is secured, financial and regulatory barriers can be systematically addressed and minimized.

Balance the automobile.

Mr. Arrington explained that not all automobile congestion is bad for urban areas, and emphasized the need for innovative TOD parking and pedestrian design.

Build communities, not projects.

TOD projects will not garner public support solely based on the presence of transit options. The development must be a holistic project with a diversity of land uses and design features that engage people in a variety of activities. Mr. Arrington explained that successful projects in Tyson's Corner, VA and Arvada, CO have relied on community input to guide the project design.

Take the long view.

In the world of place making, there is no finish line. Creating a development "hot spot" where things happen requires attention to small and large details, and the patience to allow strategies and opportunities to develop over time.

"Transit should be part of the great civic design conversation."

-GB Arrington

Increase emphasis on implementation.

As city building evolves, the practice of planning needs to pay greater attention to implementation. Mr. Arrington emphasized the importance of ensuring that TOD projects are legally allowable, noting that a number of existing TODs are technically 'illegal' according to current zoning and design guidelines. In some cases, this will require replacing suburban design standards with urban design standards. In Tysons Corner, MD, Mr. Arrington is working to increase housing density and physical connectivity by refashioning the original "sprawl city" into 6 Transit-Oriented Developments. Updated financial tools, design guidelines and governance structures are all integral to this process. The project is guided by a 37-member steering committee that provides direction and support for the project.

"Statistically we know that people will walk further for mixed use and higher density."

-GB Arrington

In addition to the key principles listed above, Mr. Arrington shared results of some behavioral research at TODs that can and should guide their future design. When thought of as a bull's-eye, transit stops in a TOD are at the center and should have the highest intensity and mix of uses. The surrounding centers and edges often have decreasing activity intensity. Research has indicated that office and retail uses should be cited closest to transit stops to encourage walking, while pedestrians are willing to walk further towards the 'edge' for residential uses.

While sorting out the how to best site land uses in a TOD to encourage walking, parking design continues to be a puzzle that needs to be solved.

Mr. Arrington explained that changing parking is a key to fully realizing the potential of TODs. Many current TODs are surrounded by large parking lots, a function of existing requirements designed for automobile-oriented developments.

There is a need to modify these to reflect the behavior expected at and around TODs. Research shows that TODs behave differently and generate 60% less traffic than conventional housing developments. Updated parking policies would result in: lower fees for developers, higher ridership on transit, less public investment in TOD infrastructure and minimized land consumption.

"Form follows parking."

- Michael Eisner, Disney CEO

TODs are an exciting reflection of a renewed interest in urbanism. There are a number of starting points for their design and implementation and the most successful projects will be the result of a dedicated partnership between designers, local government and an engaged public.