

# Chapter 14

## Challenges of Making Efficient Use of Existing Infrastructure: Developers and Transit Oriented Development

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### ABSTRACT

*In market-based economies, one of the significant challenges and aims of planning is coordinating the provision of infrastructure with development. A specific case of this involves making more efficient use of existing infrastructure by encouraging more intense, higher density, mixed-use development around transit nodes. Focusing on the development industry, the key proponents of development in market-based economies, this chapter discusses some aspects of the challenges for planners and urban policy makers in facilitating Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) in market-based economies, referring from time-to-time to the urban area of Greater Brisbane, Australia to provide a concrete example to help illustrate some of the problems. The implementation of TODs may be considerably slower than what their advocates may desire for several reasons. Developers operate in specific development submarkets (or groups thereof) for which they devise strategies to operate and compete within. These strategies may also make it difficult and unattractive to switch to or enter other markets. TODs present some special risks to developers due to their mixed-use character and their locational aspects. As a result, the range of firms with the capacity for, or interest in, undertaking TOD is likely to be small.*

### INTRODUCTION

In market-based economies, one of the significant challenges and aims of planning is coordinating the provision of infrastructure with development.

Coordination is intended to promote orderly development and promote efficient and sustainable use of scarce resources and, thus, contributes to the creation of more sustainable cities. This is relevant in Australia as in any other market-based economy. The Australian State of Queensland's *Integrated Planning Act 1997* (IPA), for example,

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seeks, under a general rubric of sustainability, to coordinate such activities through the integration of land use plans and infrastructure plans (IPA, Sections 1.2.1, 1.2.3 & 5.1.1). The Government of Queensland has attempted to achieve this goal through requiring Local Governments to plan the coordination of infrastructure with development. However, the problem has been daunting and the solution elusive, with the State having to substantially change its approach from an initial system known as Benchmark Development Sequencing (Harvey 1999) to one now based on Priority Infrastructure Plans (IPA, 1997, Chapter 5 Part 1).

While the vicissitudes of this and other approaches to coordinating infrastructure and development would make interesting reading, the focus of this paper is on a slightly different issue which is a specific case of the task of coordinating infrastructure and development. The interest here is on the matter of making more efficient use of resources through making better use of existing infrastructure by encouraging more intense, higher density, mixed-use development around already well serviced locations. This is consistent with advancing the purposes of the IPA which include 'encouraging urban development in areas where adequate infrastructure exists' (IPA, 1997, Section 1.2.3[(d)]). Specifically for this chapter, the focus is on the matter of encouraging mixed-use development around transport nodes, or Transit Oriented Development (TOD). It is not necessary here to engage in argument about the definition of TOD, though it is worth noting that the lack of a clear, definitive definition may have been an impediment to its implementation (Dittmar & Poticha, 2004; Belzer & Autler, 2002). Quite simply and sufficiently, Calthorpe (1993, p. 41) outlines the concept as development where: 'moderate and high density housing, along with complementary public uses, jobs, retail and services, are concentrated in mixed-use developments at strategic points along the regional transit system. Walkability is paramount and principles, in summary, are to:

- organize growth on a regional level to be compact and transit supportive;
- place commercial, housing, jobs, parks, and civic uses within walking distance of transit strips;
- create pedestrian-friendly street networks which directly connect local destinations;
- provide a mix of housing types, densities, and costs;
- preserve sensitive habitat, riparian zones, and high quality open space;
- make public spaces the focus of building orientation and neighborhood activity; and
- encourage infill and redevelopment along transit corridors within existing neighborhoods.' (Calthorpe, 1993, p. 43)

This chapter aims to highlight and discuss some aspects of the challenges for planners and urban policy makers in facilitating TODs in market-based economies. It will, from time-to-time, refer to the example of Greater Brisbane in South East Queensland, Australia. This real example, with its particular context and character, can be useful to help illustrate the problem. The focus is on the development industry, the key proponents of development in market-based economies.

The challenge of making TODS work in market-based economies is a particular example of, and helps deepen understanding of, a broader problem for planning in market economies, that has been recognized for some time. In what still is possibly one of the most thorough empirical analyses of the implementation of planning, in this case at a whole metropolitan level, McLoughlin argues persuasively that planning is largely ineffective in shaping urban development (1992). This is because planning is based on a naïve understanding of market forces in a market economy. This kind of problem continues to resonate through planning over time, for example, in a critique of the same city's Activity Centers Strategy (Birrell, O'Connor, Rapson & Healey, 2005).

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