

Transit Oriented Development Public Comments

September 21, 2009 Council Meeting

Kevin Byrne:

Went to New Rochelle, a City who recently had a transit oriented development built in its downtown. Much larger City than Beacon, with more development than Beacon.

Bring to the Council Attention is the Zoning that allowed that TOD, which is in an area that has a lot of parking garages. With a lot of developments place on top of these garages, with a small mall that has chain stores, (inside/outside shopping mall). This area is impossible to walk to, from anywhere especially the train station, and physically impossible to ride a bike.

The Developer made a lot of money; it was a project that the MTA may use as a model for other TOD type developments. In my opinion it was one of the worse things that I had to experience as an urban experience. It is completely self contained, high dollar, high density development. On the street level is basically nothing but parking garages so when walking you have to dodge cars, and buses that are crossing the sidewalks. The sidewalks are minuscule, with no accommodations for anything but people who are driving from the suburbs, park there and then go to the chain stores that are there.

New Rochelle is a city that has a wide disparity with very wealthy areas, and very poor areas downtown, and the development that was put there has no relationship to the existing downtown. There was no one walking. Interstate 95 is very close by, which is a similar situation as we have here in Beacon, a few bridges that connect to the TOD area.

Whatever was done in New Rochelle should not be allowed with the zoning that's been developed.

Also been to Seattle, and they have had a series of TOD, which are small scale, they have mixed uses, with retail on the first floor, which is connected to pedestrian walkways. This was planned very carefully, by a comprehensive city

wide effort which made everyone money and provided fine housing, which is attractive and worthwhile.

If the development model that is going to be enacted here in the City of Beacon, is what some of the major developers in places like New Rochelle and other places and up and down the Hudson, it is something that the City should have a responsibility to try to avoid legal tools that the City has with our Zoning

John Givney

Last time I was at a meeting I accused you of selling out business on Main Street. Now I want to say, you are giving away our waterfront. The last thing I noticed was the Mayor suggested at the last workshop that businesses on Main Street will be giving a priority with new spaces on the waterfront. That is like poaching businesses from landlords on Main Street. If this is the case, maybe you should appeal the law against store front apartments on Main Street that was passed a few years ago and allow landlords to survive.

Mark Roland

Clarifications:

I am not against ways to increase Beacons Tax base as a taxpayer. I am also in favor of the Transit Oriented Development which is a great project for the City. Maximizing the potential of the waterfront as a community resource, with a place of enjoyment and commerce and transit is welcomed. The current draft of the TOD zone right now, is inadequate in addressing a lot of these fundamental issues that are really supposed to be the core of a transit development zone. These includes parking, traffic and linkage to the rest of the city as well as some issues related to the comprehensive plan. The City has one shot making Beacon's Waterfront asset work for us, if we do it correctly, it will have a very positive impact way beyond, what a tax base increase could be, in terms of stimulating the economy. We are here at the birth of the environmental movement in the United States. We have Scenic Hudson, Rivers and Estuaries Center. To capitalize on this and make Beacon known not only for art and DIA and its industrial past, but also the future of where the country and the world has to go. This is a great

opportunity. As of right now there are too many unanswered questions in the current TOD zoning draft.

Every TOD has its own unique considerations small cities and towns haven't really been subject to a lot of Transit Oriented Development yet. Although ironically, that is what Beacon was built on, was Transit Oriented Development.

The City needs to make sure that we are getting the best planning possible for our situation. Right now Senator Chris Dodd has submitted legislation in August, called "Livable Communities Act of 2009". It is currently in the legislative process. This bill offers the prospect of hundreds and millions of dollars, like four hundred and three million dollars in Federal Aid to TOD, Brownfield Redevelopment and complete street program for communities just like Beacon. So I think since no one has brought up any pressing deadlines to rush this through, I ask this City Council to please slow down this zoning change process, 1) just to see if the Federal Aid might be inimitably available to help the City of Beacon with this project, and 2) more importantly to make certain that we are not unduly pressured by external entities forces to make decisions that ultimately will not be in the City of Beacon best interest, and that we are doing right by our waterfront.

Michael Benzer

The Economic Task Force that was established to work on the economic problems facing the City and development a meeting has not been held for months. Has this Task Force been disbanded, is it not active. If it has in my opinion I think it would be very appropriate if the group that was involved with the Economic Task Force, should comment and advise and put together a statement about the TOD

George Mansfield

As I have said before, I would urge the Council to slow down the approval process regarding the rezoning of the TOD until you are confident that you understand thoroughly the impact it will have on Beacon. I spent about four hours today researching other TODs which have been completed and I learned that many of them fail to live up to the standards that would apply to a true TOD. They often result in a development that is adjacent to a transit hub and have few of the environmental, traffic and quality of life benefits of a promised TOD. More often

than not a city or town ends up with a Transit Adjacent Development (TAD). The current draft of the TOD zoning before the council is more reflective of a TAD zoning and I would urge the council to set the bar high and achieve all the benefits of a true TOD. We should not compromise for a TAD.

Though the TOD zone is indicated by a dotted line distinguishing its borders its impact will be felt well beyond the dotted line. I urge the council to not make a determination on this zoning until they have mandated a clear link to Main St. This link should include a permanent shuttle service, pedestrian friendly paths and safe bicycling routes.