

Incorporating Community Benefits

Why is it important to consider community benefits in transit area plans ?

Development near transit stations often brings economic benefits into a community and requires some public investment. Often, large scale planning near transit stations requires some public funds to pay for the planning process, purchase land, or provide needed infrastructure. In many cases, people want to know how development can benefit the whole community, what kinds of jobs will be provided, who will be able to afford the new homes, and how the development will fit into the existing neighborhood. Requiring community benefits ensures the community gets a good return on public investment and creates integrated neighborhoods and great communities.

Incorporating community benefits such as good jobs, affordable homes and needed services in development plans creates integrated neighborhoods and Great Communities.

Incorporating community benefits - such as affordable homes, good jobs, public parks, green design and needed services - in development near transit stations creates vibrant areas where all people can work, shop, live, and play. Including a mix of places near transit makes it easier for people to run errands and get around without a car. Requiring these benefits brings measurable, permanent improvements for residents and workers, allows community groups to shape plans and builds support for new development.



The redevelopment of the Bay Meadows race track in San Mateo near their Caltrain Baby Bullet stop will include public parks and affordable homes to benefit current and future residents and workers.



New development at Santa Rosa's Railroad Square SMART station will include community benefits: affordable homes, living wages, green design, and a public plaza for farmer's markets.

How do we get Community Benefits ?

Community benefits can be secured through community benefit agreements (CBA's), through Requests for Proposals (RFP) and through city policies. CBAs are legally binding documents between the developer and community groups that set forth the benefits the developer agrees to provide in the development. In return for such benefits, community groups agree to publicly support the development proposal. Cities release RFPs calling for developers who can plan and develop an area, especially for publicly-owned sites. Cities can lay out specific requirements for community benefits in the RFP. Cities can also lay out community benefits requirements in city policies, such as living wage or inclusionary housing ordinances.

What are Community Benefits ?

AFFORDABLE HOMES Including affordable homes in development near transit stations helps meet a critical need and increases transit ridership. Often people who need affordably priced homes depend on public transit and own fewer cars. Cities can create more affordable homes through inclusionary housing requirements, designated sites, and financial contributions from commercial developers.

GOOD JOBS Locating good jobs near transit improves people's quality of life and creates a great community. When people have good jobs and can take transit to work, they have more time to spend with their family and

neighbors. Cities can require living wages, local hiring practices, contributions to job training programs and labor peace provisions, allowing workers in leased spaces to unionize if they choose.

ECOLOGICAL DESIGN AND PARKS Ecologically-designed buildings reduce energy consumption, improve indoor air quality and reduce air and water pollution. Public parks and open space within urban areas improve air and water quality, improve public health and maintain a high quality of life. Residents at and near new developments as well as the broader city and region enjoy these benefits. Cities can require developers to meet green building standards such as those of the California Integrated Waste Management Board or the National Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Cities can also require developers to clean and dedicate toxic land as public parks, and to contribute financially to park maintenance.

COMMUNITY SERVICES Locating community services near transit creates vibrant neighborhoods where people can easily access what they need. Incorporating these services within development plans helps cities to meet residents' needs, particularly in downtown areas. Libraries, health clinics, community centers, schools, and child care centers are all services that can be included in plans for transit villages. Cities can identify sites for whichever services are most needed and require developers to contribute to building them.

Transit village that includes community benefits

RAILROAD SQUARE, SANTA ROSA, SMART STATION

The City of Santa Rosa's Request for Proposals for Railroad Square requires that developers include green design, living wages for major commercial tenants employees, prevailing wages for construction workers and that at least 15% of the homes are affordable. All three developers submitting proposals to the City have agreed to sign a community benefits agreement with the Accountable Development Coalition.



Historic Railroad Square District historic street lamp and community banners.

ELEMENTS OF CBA'S

- good jobs
- living wages
- affordable homes
- green design
- libraries
- public parks
- health clinics
- community centers
- schools
- child care centers

Checklist to ensure community benefits are incorporated:

- What percentage of the homes will be affordable to people earning the median income and less? How will the city make sure affordable housing is included?
- Will construction workers and employees in new commercial spaces be paid a prevailing or living wage? Are there ways to make sure local residents are hired for some of the jobs?
- Are the buildings required to meet green building or LEED standards?
- Are public parks included as part of the development?
- What types of community services will be created as part of the development?