

Transit Revitalization Investment District (TRID) Master Plan

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

Since the development of the interstate highway system in the 1950's, Philadelphia, like many other American cities, has invested heavily in automobile-based transportation infrastructure. As its population has grown, new development concentrated on the outskirts of the city. The low cost of this land attracted buyers even though this property is often far from transit centers. This random and unplanned pattern of growth, called sprawl, leads to widespread low-density development of suburban areas and disinvestment in the urban core. Within the structural framework of the city, sprawl causes significant environmental, economic, and social problems:

Environmental problems: increased fossil fuel consumption, deforestation, wildlife habitat destruction, air and water pollution, natural resource depletion.

Economic problems: increased stormwater, utility, and road construction/maintenance costs, deterioration of historic commercial centers, decreased value of urban real estate.

Social problems: decreased transportation options, increased traffic congestion and more automobile accidents, separation of the urban poor from jobs, decreased sense of community, loss of support for public facilities and public amenities.

Philadelphia boasts the fifth largest transit system in the country, yet many stations are underutilized and surrounded by vacant space, parking lots, and former industrial property. The unappealing landscape made up of deteriorating streets and sidewalks make for unpleasant and often unsafe corridors between neighborhoods and rail stations. As part of an initiative

to combat sprawl and leverage its existing mass transportation system, Philadelphia is investing in transit-oriented development (TOD). This design strategy encourages a sustainable pattern of high-density urban development concentrated around mass transit stations.

The Transit Revitalization Investment District (TRID) Master Plan is a potential 20-year development plan that re-imagines the landscapes surrounding two problem stations. The plan aims to make these stations hubs for high-density growth and development with safe and convenient access to mass transportation. Neighborhood demographics, tree inventories, street conditions, as well as pedestrian and traffic movement patterns were examined. Once designers identified and understood all barriers to ridership, they created a master plan that integrated new open spaces, enhanced street design, and event programming. The improvements have fostered an improved public perception of the space.

The TRID plan creates new civic space at the doorstep of each station. At the Temple Station, for example, a new pedestrian plaza beneath the station includes bicycle parking, a new café, benches, trees, and other plant material. A new green roof gateway replaces a deteriorating stairwell as the station's main entrance. Its beautiful landscape and open layout make the walk to the station a more pleasant and inviting experience. At the 46th street station, a small linear park creates a diagonal connection between the station and a major roadway while providing enhanced views and more direct pedestrian pathways. This green space also brings the community together for outdoor movies, farmers markets, and informal social gatherings.

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The new station designs offer enhanced connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists by creating complete connector streets. Near the Temple Station, tree-line sidewalks and brightly painted bicycle lanes bridge the connection between the station and existing neighborhoods. Trees and rain gardens fill old vacant lots. This change adds beauty to the once-barren landscape while also helping to ecologically manage stormwater. At the 46th Street Station, a new running track circles a large city block occupied by schools and athletic fields. This addition creates recreational space for the community while enhancing the station's accessibility. A defunct rail bridge was once a concrete eyesore that shouldered a major roadway leading to the station. The plan transforms this structure into a tree nursery, a space to grow trees for future streetscaping. This innovative design helps turn this obstruction into a unique asset for the community.

Project Resources

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Interface Studio LLC

ECONOMIC CONSULTING

Econsult Corporation

TRANSPORT PLANNING

JZTI Transport

DEVELOPMENT

Lamar Wilson Associates Inc.