

Traditional Neighborhood Development/Mixed Use

“Almost any man worthy of his salt would fight to defend his home, but no one ever heard of a man going to war for his boarding house”

~ Mark Twain

America no longer builds “home towns” like those we idealize in shows such as *Andy Griffith* and, still today, *Everwood*. Instead, for the past 50 years we have constructed single-purpose, cookie-cutter subdivisions that have removed us from many of those things that we use and people we see every day. Traditional Neighborhood Development and mixed-use efforts attempt to take us back towards a built environment that supports community and livable, walkable towns.

Traditional neighborhood development (TND) is a comprehensive plan that promotes a variety of housing types and land uses within a distinct area. In a TND, residents have options for walking, biking or driving within their neighborhood, while public and private spaces are equally important.¹



Mixed-use is a development and building pattern that allows buildings with a mix of certain zoning district uses and/or sites with a mix of such uses, whether these were in

adjacent parts of a block of buildings, or in separate parts of the same site.²

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) and mixed use, while not synonymous, are commonly found in conjunction with each other, have similar intentions, and, when successful, contain many of the same characteristics. In actuality, these efforts commonly complement each other and help to ensure the other’s success. The design and connectivity of TND support transit and walkability, while increased densities and mixed use help to ensure that there are useful destinations for transit and non-motorized travel. Studies have found that “the density and location of compact development also allows for

a more economical extension of public services and utilities than is possible under more dispersed trend development...and the relatively higher densities of compact development also enable natural features and agricultural areas to be preserved and protected from development.”³

Since infrastructure costs are decreased in

¹ *Smart Growth and Traditional Neighborhood Development*. Available from: <http://www.smartgrowthinfo.com/>

² *Mixed Use Planned Development Overlay District*. 7 Sept 2004. Hurst, TX Code of Ordinances, Chapter 27, Zoning. Available from: www.ci.hurst.tx.us/Publications/Development/MUZoning2A.pdf

³ Mix, Troy. 2003. *Exploring the Benefits of Compact Development*. University of Delaware, Institute for Public Administration, for the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination.

compact developed areas, units themselves built in this area may also be more affordable to the workforce due to the decreased need for impact fees and necessary special taxing units. Considering all of the benefits, it is not surprising that compact, mixed-use development, often referred to as Smart Growth, is the model that most of the nation is using to revitalize economies and accommodate their continuing growth in a sustainable manner. However, the concept, in itself, is not enough. To reap the benefits of mixed use, regulations must be designed to accommodate, and even incentivize this livable, walkable urban form.

Zoning laws attempt to address this by using different forms of mixed-use zoning. A mixed use district will most commonly be the “downtown” of the community. The mixed use guidelines often result in residential buildings with streetfront commercial space. Retailers have the assurance that they will always have customers living right above and around them, while residents have the benefit of being able to walk a mere number of yards to get groceries and household items, or see a movie.¹



Once mixed use is permissible through the local zoning code, direction for the development itself is commonly implemented using a form-based code in order to ensure a visually pleasing outcome. In addition, today’s technology has allowed many uses, once thought to be

¹ Wikipedia.com *Mixed-use Development*. Available from: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixed-use_development

disturbing to neighborhoods, to be placed within mixed-use or residential communities without negative impact to the surrounding residents. Many of the issues of conflict between adjacent uses can now be mitigated through regulating



the building form (in three dimensions). Simply put, many urban building types (multi-story, main street shopfronts, etc.) do not readily lend themselves to particular noxious uses. Additional issues, such as glare, are addressed through both the Building Envelope Standards and the Architectural Standards, where elements such as lighting and signage are regulated.

“Providing shopping, jobs and community services within convenient walking distance allows residents to meet some of their daily needs without driving. This provides mobility and freedom to all residents, from eight-year-olds who can’t drive yet to 80-year-olds who don’t drive any more.”²

Additional Resources:

Constantine, James and J. Carson Looney. *Three P’s of Traditional Home Design: Proportion, Parking and Privacy*. Available from: www.tndhomes.com/grad03.htm

Metropolitan Area Planning Council. *Mixed Use Zoning: A Citizens’ Guide*. www.mapc.org/whats_new/Regional_Record/May_2006/Mixed_Use_Toolkit/Mixed_Use_Citizens_Guide.pdf

Capitol Region Council of Governments. *CRCOG Best Practices Manual: Traditional Neighborhood Design*. Available from: www.crcog.org/community_dev/pdfs/Ch06_FactSheet_TND.pdf

² Constantine, James. *America’s New Traditional Neighborhoods*. Available from: www.tndhomes.com/under02.htm