Creating Dynamic Communities

Transit and TOD Planning

The desire for greater connectivity is driving the transformation of ground transportation hubs into mixed-use, transit-oriented development (TOD) opportunities. The rising popularity of public transit means that cities must work with designers and planners that understand the placemaking value these unique projects present, and their impact on the cultural and economic goals of the community.

Building upon founder Art Gensler’s involvement with the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) System back in the early 1960’s, Gensler has consistently remained in the forefront of innovative transportation-anchored planning and design.

Our transit-oriented development expertise includes:

- Station design
- Urban regeneration and site development
- Urban design frameworks
- Transportation planning
- Design codes and guides
- Feasibility studies and site assessment
- Site assembly
- Consultation and community engagement

The new paradigm for urban living requires a strategic approach to planning and urban design that integrates community, sustainability, and innovation into the design approach. Gensler has long been recognized as a leader in the development of transit and transportation facilities, including large-scale city and community master plans, and development projects for both the private and public sectors.

70% of Millennials say they want to live somewhere that is walkable.
Exponential Benefits

Multiple benefits arise from concentrating density around transit. Since TOD features more compact development and often results from infill development, local governments can often reduce infrastructure costs of expanding water, sewage and roads to local governments by 25 percent. TOD is better for the environment, since TODs provide safe and easy pedestrian access to transit, air pollution and energy consumption rates can be lowered. Because TOD consumes less land than low-density, auto-oriented growth, it reduces the need to convert farmland and open spaces to development. And TOD can lower annual household rates of driving by 20 percent to 40 percent for those living, working, and/or shopping near transit stations.

TOD & Equity

Building equitable, transit-oriented communities means ensuring that people from all walks of life have access to quality transportation choices, housing and opportunity. The second largest household expense after housing is transportation. This means that building and preserving housing in "efficient" locations can create opportunities for families to have more affordable lifestyles. Linking TOD and equity may involve adopting policies or programs that promote affordable or mixed-income housing near transit, coordinating plans for housing and transportation, involving stakeholders of all backgrounds and a range of interests in the community development process, and other strategies.

Whether a transit station or mixed-use development, we search out the “real experience” and sense of the community we are in. People respond best to places that are connected with the street and offer an amenity of entertainment and retail options.

bottom: Transit LA, designed by Gensler, was developed to address how to best spend the recent passage of a $40 billion public transportation bond of shifting people from their cars to public transit in Los Angeles
Bergamot Transit Village Center
Santa Monica, CA

Breaking up a “superblock” to create more linkages to transit and a more interactive community

The Bergamot Transit Village Center is a proposal for a transit oriented development (T.O.D.) in Santa Monica, California. The site is located across the street from the future Bergamot Expo Line Metro station, scheduled to open in 2015. The existing site’s “superblock” character creates a lifeless edge and a community barrier in all directions. A system of landscaped public open spaces and smaller block sizes would establish a new pedestrian-oriented urban lifestyle for this area of the city.

As the first residential development in the neighborhood, the city sought a project plan focused on following through with the vision and guidelines established by the city’s Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE) plan that governs this district. The intent is to create a vibrant 24/7 environment that paves the way for further neighborhood development.

The design strategy strongly orients project buildings, public spaces, and a boulevard-scale streetscape towards Olympic, contributing to its transformation into an active mixed-use corridor.

An event-scaled transit plaza, lined with retail, emphasizes a connection to the future Bergamot Expo Line station. Live/work spaces establish a new Nebraska Avenue extension as the project’s more neighborhood-oriented northern street edge. In addition, four new north-south streets and pedestrian ways subdivide the site into small blocks, enabling pedestrian life to flow through the project. With a walkable block scale more typical of Santa Monica’s older commercial and residential neighborhoods, each street or passageway—some straight, others angled—gains an individual identity through its distinctive streetscape, as well as its associated park or open space.

The new connectivity established by this project ensures the development will be woven into the district’s existing neighborhood pattern. The project’s emphasis—streets and passages creating openness and connectivity—is essential for creating a sense of place, while being consistent with the intent of the LUCE plan to promote a pedestrian-friendly, livable and sustainable community.

Services Provided

Architecture - Other (Primary)
Architecture - Building Analysis / Due Diligence
Architecture - Programming
Architecture - Project Definition / Feasibility Study
Architecture - Site Evaluation
Planning - Mixed Use
Planning - Public Participation
Planning - Redevelopment
Planning - Transportation Studies
Planning - Urban Design

750,000 sq ft

Breaking up a “superblock” to create more linkages to transit and a more interactive community
A new health care campus built around transit is poised to create a transformation in the delivery of care in the community

The MLK Medical Center Campus was originally developed after the 1965 Watts civil unrest in response to the lack of community services in the community. Current challenges in the community have given rise to a broader objective by the County of Los Angeles and its health care partners - an understanding that the reopening of the hospital provides a catalytic opportunity. Thoughtfully taking advantage of the new medical facilities and the nearby transit stop enables the revitalization of the MLK Medical Center Campus and adjacent community while advancing social, economic and environmental quality in South Los Angeles.

The Campus Master Plan and Community Vision is wide ranging in concept, long-term in its focus, but well-grounded in the details. While conceptual, the plan reflects a unique understanding of current approaches to improving health and wellness, as well as contemporary land use planning principles.

The plan incorporates traditional planning techniques and elements, utilizes systemic solutions that better respond to complex needs and changing lifestyles while acknowledging the imperative nature of active, healthy lifestyles. A defining element of the plan, the Wellness Spine, both physically and programmatically embodies these critical characteristics and is representative of the new identity. Ultimately, the MLK Medical Center Campus Master Plan and Community Vision portrays a future that develops and thrives over 20 years, but is pragmatic, with many components that can be implemented in the short term, at relatively low cost, but with high impact.

Completed 2013

Services Provided
- Master Planning
- Community Outreach/Facilitation
- Branding Design Guidelines

Awards
- Merit Award for Urban Design, Willowbrook MLK Wellness Community Vision and Campus Plan, AIA, California Council
- Neighborhood Planning Award, Willowbrook MLK Wellness Community, APA Los Angeles
Mariachi Plaza

Los Angeles, CA, USA

A revitalized plaza design will attract new transit users and provide a community resource for this iconic site

A Los Angeles landmark, Mariachi Plaza is located only one mile from downtown and is a cultural center of the historic Boyle Heights neighborhood. The Metro Gold Line station embedded in the site is an underused resource for the surrounding community. To be successful, the station plaza and any future developments need to be integrated physically and functionally with each other and with the urban fabric.

The redevelopment plan proposed by the partnership of Gensler and Primestor Development features more than 120,000 square feet of retail and office space within two low-rise buildings and provides needed services such as restaurants, markets and fitness uses. The plaza design includes improved waiting areas for bus riders, amenities for bicyclists and improving streetscaping and sidewalks for pedestrians.

The design also integrates an open space zone which transitions from the more public plaza to the semi-public entries and terraces of the ground floor shops. The ground floor is devised as a marketplace, a place to mingle, shop, and eat with neighbors and visitors. The second floor fitness center, visible from the plaza, provides activated views while the more private medical office uses occupy the floors above.

Parking is located at the northwest portion of the site, away from the pedestrian oriented plaza, but still easily accessible to visitors and Metro riders. Additional plaza improvements include added shade structures, seating, landscape amenities and performing arts capabilities.
New Carrollton
Transit-Oriented Development

New Carrollton, MD, USA

A public-private partnership looks to turn an under-performing transit-adjacent site into a vibrant transit-oriented hub.

The New Carrollton, MD, transit node sits eleven miles northeast of downtown Washington, DC. Despite its proximity to the heart of the nation’s capital, it often feels worlds away.

New Carrollton is where the Penn Line passenger train that snakes its way between DC and New York converges with the Washington Metrorail system. Nearby lies the Washington Beltway. A regional light rail system is also planned to terminate at New Carrollton. Yet other than a large Internal Revenue Service (IRS) office complex, there is currently little to draw people to the quiet area. For now it is simply a pass through, a park-and-go concrete environment.

That will soon change thanks to a forward-thinking vision laid out by a host of public and private stakeholders. A team that includes Maryland’s Prince George’s County, the Washington Metro Area Transit Authority (WMATA), several developers, and the state of Maryland are working to bring new life to the area.

As part of that effort Gensler, is developing a comprehensive 39-acre master plan that serves as a road map for creating sustainable urbanism and economic activity. Part town center and part multi-modal hub, the concept focuses on place making, pedestrian and vehicular connections, and a variety of mixed product types to create activity throughout the day and evening.

The underlying framework of the master plan is designed to allow for changes in market conditions and program over time. Thus, roads are laid out to create flexible development parcels that can be sized to accommodate a variety of different project types.

To provide New Carrollton with a self-sustaining economic undercurrent, planners have placed low-height structures that require less financing at the edges of the site. As demand grows and rents rise, revenues will increase. Development will then be able to move toward the station with the economic conditions in place to support a corresponding increase in the height and complexity of projects.

Key to the success of New Carrollton is the realignment of existing bus and car circulation through the site to create a safe and inviting pedestrian environment. Plazas near the station and at strategic locations throughout the site will further underscore the New Carrollton as a people-friendly environment. These lush, flexible green spaces will improve the transfer experience for travelers and provide a connection to nature for residents.

When New Carrollton is completed, it will be an economic and cultural boon for the area. It will enable increased employment, be a place that people are proud to call home, and function as the destination of choice for interfacing with regional transit.
The Domain

Austin, TX, USA

The Domain is a thoughtfully planned, sustainable community offering abundant choices for working, playing, shopping and living. Construction has begun on the multi-family buildings, as well as Austin’s first loft hotel and a richly landscaped 9-acre community park and pavilion. Plans also include the addition of a 138,000 square foot Nordstrom, relocation of Saks Fifth Avenue from an existing 50,000 square foot store at Arboretum Market to a new 80,000 square foot home at the Domain, and 500,000 square feet of specialty retail by fall 2011. Relocated and expanded from Gateway Shopping Center, a 70,000 square foot Whole Foods Market will be situated at the community’s front door, along Loop 1 (MoPac).

When complete, The Domain will offer nearly 2 million square feet of retail, dining and entertainment, 3.5 million square feet of office space, 4,500 residential units, and three hotels. The vibrant new sustainable community will help define the appeal of Austin’s evolving urban lifestyle for decades to come, while keeping a mindful eye on the capital city’s burgeoning growth and what has historically made Austin unique and progressive.

Services Provided
Architectural Design
Interior Design
LEED Documentation/Coordination

Legend
- The Domain
- Retail
- Anchor
- Hotel
- Cinema

2,301,588 sq ft
North Hollywood
Transit-Oriented Development

North Hollywood, CA

Mixed-Use TOD combines entertainment and housing to cultivate the North Hollywood district as an entertainment destination.

The vision for the North Hollywood Metro Station is to create a 21st Century digital neighborhood where everything converges. As this operates as a transit-oriented mixed-use development the space speaks to different users. The Transit user emerges into a destination where they will spend extra time. The Resident lives in the epicenter of art, culture and digital connectivity.

The visitor can shop, eat, explore, design and create. This space will build upon NoHo’s creative district that invites the entertainment community and art aficionados to experience art in public venues. Project was completed within the project schedule and estimated budget.

Services Provided
Planning/Mixed-Use (Primary)
Oakridge Centre

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Oakridge is a transformation of an outdated mall into a lively mixed-use destination integrated into its surrounding community.

Currently in its initial concept phase, the complete renovation of the Oakridge Centre will revitalize Vancouver’s most visited retail center.

Located within a residential community in Vancouver, the redevelopment of the Oakridge Centre has received initial resistance from the community members. In response, the Gensler team developed a vision that strategically interweaves a sustainable urban fabric into the retail center, creating environments which foster interactions between live, work and play.

The community integration begins with the entrance points of the center that pull the city into the retail center from the street. Once inside, pedestrians and shoppers are provided a curated experience of over 1.4 million square-feet of retail identified by different districts.

Oakridge will become a destination for visitors combining existing green spaces within the center, a potential transit integration and a wide variety of retail combining high-end retailers, popular fashion, fine-dining, casual food and beverage, digital media and grocery.

The redevelopment of Oakridge Centre resides within a larger development, an expansion of the existing 28.3 acres site to 2 million square feet of retail, residential, office, park and civic programs as well as four levels of subterranean parking of the building area.

2,000,000 sq ft

Estimated Completion
2023

Services Provided
Architectural Design

Program Highlights
Residential tower
424,000 sq ft of office space and community center
1.4 million sq ft retail
2,900 residential units
70,000 sq ft fitness / res amenities
25,000 sq ft cinema
Greenbelt Transit Oriented Development and Federal Office Campus

Greenbelt, MD

In this unique opportunity, Gensler was engaged by a private landowner to develop a master plan for a proposed 2 million SF federal office complex, and approximately 2 million SF of transit-oriented, mixed-use commercial and residential development.

Capitalizing on the site’s multimodal transit potential and proximity to the District of Columbia, the Gensler plan balances a commercial viability with federally mandated security requirements in order to create a vibrant public place serving both the federal tenants and new residents. Gensler worked closely with the client, and a multidisciplinary team including landscape architects, civil engineers, traffic analysts, and real estate advisors to develop an exciting, pedestrian-oriented, yet technically feasible plan on a site formerly occupied by a sea of surface parking. The Gensler team collaborated with local municipalities and agencies, including the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, in order to bring development goals and public planning into alignment with each other.
The Avenue of Angels
Urban Design Master Plan
Los Angeles, CA

The Avenue of Angels: Francisco Street is poised to undergo a considerable transformation. The purpose of this plan is to provide a rational framework to encourage coordinated development for a district that supports the overall goal and vision of a modern Los Angeles as a major Hospitality / Media / Office/ Retail/ Financial and Sports center.

The plan strives to benefit from the success of the surrounding development and to encourage selective architectural preservation of historic buildings in this unique district of Los Angeles that has a rich history.

The nucleus will be defined by a strong corridor leading from the Los Angeles Convention Center through the Sports and Entertainment District to the northern approaches of the Financial District at the 7th/Wilshire node. The Avenue of the Angles will consist of numerous new hotels, retail and open green park spaces that will support the influx of hundreds of thousands of users arriving by car and the inter-connected public transportation systems such as the 7th Street Metro Center and the Pico Metro Blue and Expo Lines.

23.8 acres / 10 city blocks
Completed 2011

Services Provided
Master Planning
Urban Design
Architectural Design
The Ritz-Carlton Hotel & Residences and JW Marriott at L.A. LIVE

Los Angeles, CA, USA

“A spectacular new addition to the downtown skyline, and a major contributor to the city’s economy.” - LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa

Gensler’s design of the 55-story Ritz-Carlton Hotel & Residences and JW Marriott at L.A. LIVE is the visual and economic anchor of the L.A. LIVE entertainment district and a symbol of the larger community renaissance in Downtown Los Angeles’ South Park neighborhood.

At the intersection of two major freeways, adjacent to a sports arena and the Los Angeles Convention Center, the project is the first skyscraper to be built in Downtown Los Angeles in nearly two decades. The hotel and residences are supplemented by a 100,000-square-foot convention facility extending to the west. With its 45,000-square-feet of ballroom space, the facility will become an accessory to the Los Angeles Convention Center, hosting smaller conventions and supporting exhibits within the convention center.

The building itself comprises five programmatic areas: a 3 floor lobby/reception area, 21 floors of JW Marriott hotel, 5 floors of The Ritz-Carlton hotel, 26 floors of The Ritz-Carlton condominiums and the convention facility. The 2 hotels total 1,001 keys (878 JW Marriott, 123 Ritz-Carlton keys) and 224 residential units top the building.

The tower is defined by two moves: a volume that expands as it rises and a shimmering veil of variegated glass. This curtain wall is cut out on lower floors, corresponding to the rooms of the JW Marriott, which are five feet smaller than The Ritz-Carlton hotel rooms above. The building envelope is compressed again near the top where units expand vertically as two-story penthouses, rather than horizontally.

1001 keys
50 residences
1,000,000 sq ft

Completed 2010

Services Provided
Architectural Design
Interior Architectural Design
Hospitality Planning

Awards & Honors
World Architecture News
Hotel of the Year Awards, 2011, Finalist
Lodging Hospitality Design Awards, 2011, High Honors
IDEAS² Awards, 2010, President’s Award of Excellence in Engineering
Los Angeles Business Council Architectural Awards, 2010, Hospitality Category
Los Angeles Business Council Architectural Awards, 2008, Mixed-Use Design Concept Category
Gensler was selected to work side-by-side with the MGM MIRAGE Design Group team as the Executive Architect guiding the development of 20 million sf of building footprint on 66 acres of land. With the objective of creating a cosmopolitan, urban, contemporary center located on The Strip, distinguished from its surroundings, MGM MIRAGE has carefully selected a team of experts to realize their vision. As Executive Architect for a project of this magnitude our responsibilities included representing the owner’s interests in the leadership and coordination of all aspects of design, programming, construction documentation, construction administration and design of common areas infrastructure above and below grade.

CityCenter promises to be the greatest urban lace built upon the foundation of and encircled by existing MGM MIRAGE properties. Gensler is responsible for refining and executing a vast program comprised of hotels, casino, retail, residential, convention center and including support functions that will operate this extraordinary property.

The Las Vegas Monorail is a crucial piece of the development. CityCenter is the southernmost stop on the route, making it a key location for boarding this exciting transportation system.