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SHOPPING CENTERS

By Frank Montgomery, P.E., Traffic Planning and Design, Inc. **Transportation Planning for Urban Redevelopment Projects**

Urban redevelopment and revitalization projects continue to dominate the development scene in the Greater Philadelphia region. In the City of Philadelphia, these projects include residential developments that take advantage of the City's property tax abatement program, as well as commercial, retail, and mixed-use developments. From a Transportation Engineering perspective, a successful project usually starts with the developer discussing concerns with the local community, then working jointly with the community and the Philadelphia Streets Department and/or PennDOT to develop a safe and efficient traffic and parking plan, and finally committing to implement that plan as part of the approval of the development.



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The redeveloper and Transportation Engineer must engage local community organizations at the start of the project. An urban redevelopment or revitalization project by its nature has the goal of attracting more residents, shopping, or business to a certain area of the urban environment that is likely underutilized in some way today. Residents of an urban environment deal with the challenges of traffic and parking in the City on a daily basis, and understanding those concerns and incorporating reasonable recommendations at the beginning of a project, as opposed to learning about them for the first time at a Zoning Hearing, will only help advance the project. These concerns consistently involve managing traffic and parking for the development.

A recent project in East Falls, The Hilltop at Falls Ridge by Westrum Development Company, relied heavily on the involvement on the East Falls Civic Association. This project is a Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA)

Hope VI project including a mix of market-rate and affordable housing, community based commercial/retail, and access to the SEPTA R6 light rail line. Several meetings with the East Falls Civic Association and City Streets Department resulted in a safe traffic circulation plan for the site along heavily traveled Ridge Avenue. The development also includes one off-street parking space per dwelling unit, and additional proposed on-street parking to accommodate incoming residents and reduce impacts to existing on-street parking in adjacent neighborhoods.

On another such project, Siena Place in South Philadelphia, which also involves the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA), Judd Builders of the broad-based DePaul Group is redeveloping the former Passyunk Homes neighborhood in South Philadelphia. Judd plans to construct market-rate townhomes on this property owned by the PHA, and in return proposes to construct an office building

and surface parking for the PHA. Philadelphia City Council's main traffic concerns dealt with separating commercial and residential traffic and ensuring all traffic could safely gain access to the site. Traffic Planning and Design, Inc. (TPD) is currently working with the City Streets Department and PennDOT on developing intersection/traffic signal improvements that will help meet this goal.

Another unique project involves the revitalization of the historic Divine Lorraine Hotel on North Broad Street at Fairmount Street. This large redevelopment project includes a mix of reasonably priced apartments/condos, community based retail/service uses, a restaurant, and structured parking spread out over four acres. This Transit Oriented Development (TOD) features a station for the Broad Street/Ridge Spur Lines, a 3,000+ s/f bicycle storage area for residents, and is surrounded by residential neighborhoods that will foster pedestrian traffic to the site. Although this project

is in the early planning phase, the developer has aggressively engaged the local civic associations and the respective City Councilman to hear all their concerns and incorporate them into the final plans.

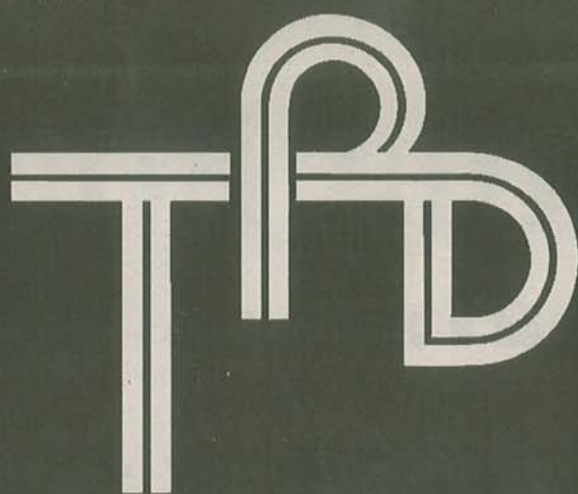
The consistent theme for all of these redevelopment projects is to seek out input from the community, reasonably address their concerns, and win their support. Since effective traffic management and parking strategies often constitute both amenities and challenges of urban redevelopment projects, an experienced Transportation Engineer can greatly facilitate the process of gaining community support and favorable reviews from the City Planning Agencies. Such support paves the way for City Council to approve the developer's project.

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