

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

There goes the neighbourhood? Or saving the world?

Community views about transit oriented development.

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Introduction

Planners and activists who support transit orientated development (TOD) are ardent proponents because of its social and environmental benefits. Yet changes to people's hometowns arouse great passions and can face substantial opposition. This chapter outlines the range of views, from strongly supportive to determinedly against, that people have about TOD; and explores in three cases studies, some of the underlying reasons as to why people hold these views. The chapter concludes by proposing some ways forward to build community support for TOD.

I want to start with three admissions. Firstly, this chapter is based on my observations and interpretations of how people feel about higher density development that is in some way connected to public transport, rather than documented research. It's supported by many discussions I've had over many years with a wide range of people, but I'm the first to acknowledge that it's not definitive. Secondly the observations are based in Melbourne. I've lived there all my life, all my professional work and community activity has taken place in Melbourne. Take from this what you will about how these observations pertain to communities in other parts of Australia, or the rest of the world. Thirdly, this piece reflects my background as an activist for a better world, and a politician, in the nicest possible sense of the word. I'm not an academic, nor a

public servant or bureaucrat. I'm subjective and biased. I support the concepts of TOD; I think the environmental and social benefits far outweigh the social impacts. My outlook in life is one of embracing change, of being flexible and enjoying the possibilities that change brings, in the context of a driving passion for environmental sustainability and social justice.

What do I mean by TOD?

I use the term broadly, as meaning higher density development which is associated with public transport nodes. TOD is at the core of the plan for the development of metropolitan Melbourne, *Melbourne 2030*. (DOI, 2002) This plans for a more compact city, better management of metropolitan growth and better transport links.

The Victorian government states that *Melbourne 2030* will deliver high quality activity centres that are easy to reach and serve the whole community; more community services in and around shopping centres, and more new housing close to services and public transport. *Melbourne 2030* states that new fringe development will be confined to specified growth areas that are well-served by public transport and where community services are carefully planned and staged. These activity centres are identified as neighbourhood activity centres, major activity centres and principle activity centres in ascending order. There are 25 Principal Activity Centres across metropolitan Melbourne. Nine of the principal activity centres are identified as transit cities, which are defined as 'regional cities and suburbs that are important in managing Melbourne's future population growth and the demand on housing and transport'. Transit cities are planned to help meet a growing demand for higher-density housing ... [and]... create diverse housing choices close to a wide range of transport options, and give people more ways to get around (DPCD, 2007)

Who likes TOD and why?

My observations are that TOD is supported by people who appreciate that it:

- Reduces reliance on cars, which has substantial environmental and social benefits
- Improves the viability of public transport and so facilitates the provision of better public transport services
- Enables a more compact city, providing housing and development opportunities without adding to city sprawl.
- Enables more affordable housing. A basic apartment in an activity centre takes up less land and should be able to be provided more economically than an outer suburban greenfields development
- Creates more activity and vibrancy and community life in a centre by having more people living closer together, who are walking, cycling, catching public transport and generally interacting with each other much more than if they lived further apart.
- Improves the economic viability of businesses in the centre by creating a bigger market with easy access for their products
- Can revitalise older centres and shopping strips that have struggled to compete with car based shopping malls
- Brings new development to replace areas which are perceived as being old and rundown
- Allows for more intensive development that would otherwise be considered as inappropriate if it was car dependent.

Critically, to support implementation of TOD in practice not just theory TOD supporters also need to be convinced that the development sites either have adequate

levels of public transport or they trust that public transport will be improved as the development is built to make it competitive with the car.

Support for TOD fits in with a broader concern about sustainable lifestyles, the future and others, and a concern about social justice and equity issues, as TOD enables the young, elderly, poor and disabled to access services where services are clustered together and served by efficient public transport.

TOD supporters can also be characterised as people who have a strong sense of community and who are happy to interact with a wide cross section of community, embracing diversity, including multicultural and socio-economic diversity. They are not threatened by difference, and are happy to live in places that have a rawer edge to them than what can be homogenous car based residential and commercial developments

TOD supporters will generally embrace change, accepting that cities are living, breathing dynamic places.

These motivations can come together in some communities to create very strong levels of support for TOD. A good illustration of this is Footscray, as discussed below.

Example one: Footscray

Footscray is 6km west of Melbourne. It was originally closely settled and working class, with a strong sense of community and belonging. People looked after each other when times were tough which they often were. It has been home to wave after wave of migrants from the Greek, Italian and Slavic communities of post World War 2, Vietnamese refugees and migrants through the '70's and '80's and ongoing, to refugees and settlers from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan over the last decade. Today almost half the population speak a language other than English at home.

After settlement Footscray developed as a centre of manufacturing and heavy and some noxious industries, so began life as a not very desirable address. Although

only 6km from the city it missed out on the gentrification of the 1970's and 1980's of the rest of inner city Melbourne largely because it is separated from Melbourne CBD by the Port, railway yards and port related transport industry. There are relatively high levels of public housing in Footscray which house low income earners, people with chronic social and health disabilities and new settlers to Australia. A greater proportion of Footscray residents than the Melbourne metropolitan average struggle with a range of social problems including illicit and licit drug use, gambling addiction and mental illness. (Maribyrnong City Council, 2002))

In general the people that choose to live in Footscray are not people that value what is trendy and smart – they are people that value the community, the diversity, the good value of life here, the public transport, and accessibility. They know they are living in an inner city 'edgy' environment, and know that life around them will often be interesting! The vision for Footscray that Maribyrnong Council developed after extensive community engagement was that Footscray would be 'safe, artsy, edgy, affordable, regional, diverse/mixed and multicultural'. (MCC, 2005)

Footscray is now experiencing significant gentrification, as real estate prices reflect the desirability of period housing in established communities with established infrastructure close to the city. However people who aspire to live somewhere 'nice' still largely prefer to live elsewhere!

Footscray is at the junction of three rail lines and has a tram line and 13 bus routes servicing it, a very rich public transport infrastructure. 2001 Census statistics showed public transport use is relatively high compared to the Melbourne average (20% of journey to work trips) and 25% of households do not own a car (MCC, 2007). It is a designated Transit City under *Melbourne 2030*.

The Footscray shopping centre is large, spread beyond a core of 4 streets. Its size reflects its past as the regional shopping centre for the western suburbs of Melbourne, prior to car based shopping malls, particularly Highpoint Shopping Centre. Footscray's retail strength is its multicultural vibrancy which includes a thriving Asian shopping hub and growing numbers of African businesses. Highpoint is the second largest shopping mall in Melbourne. It was established in the mid '70's, it's huge and still growing, has thousands of car parking spaces surrounding it, and is 4km from Footscray.

So as a site for Transit orientated development, Footscray pretty much has everything going for it, scoring highly in the TOD supporter's belief system:

- Sustainable transport: Footscray already has a rich public transport infrastructure and substantial numbers of people who don't rely on cars, so there is a significant proportion of the population who know that reduced reliance on cars is possible. The environment in which they live is already closely settled, and so the increasing density of TOD is also more likely to be acceptable, as long as it is well designed, high quality and environmentally sustainable.
- More sustainable and just environment and society: The local community includes significant numbers of people concerned about the quality of life of others, and people in the community who are more disadvantaged, don't have access to private cars and for whom high quality public transport is an important element of social inclusion and support.
- Community: There is already a lively diverse community and people value and celebrate that. Most members of the community are not fearful of newcomers.
- Economic development: Footscray is struggling economically. It needs an injection of resources. It has the land available for residential development– as

the shopping centre is too big for its current use and large areas of railway owned land around the station that is currently used for vast expanses of car parking. Critically there is acceptance of change; most people think that the physical environment could well benefit from an injection of new development, as long as the significant heritage values of the centre are maintained.

There have been two 5 storey apartment buildings and a six storey student housing development built in Footscray in recent years with very little fuss. There was more concern about an earlier ten storey apartment building because of its height and potential overlooking of nearby single storey residential properties. A four storey block of student apartments was also more controversial because it abuts an existing low rise residential precinct and has very little parking provided. Work is about to start on an eight storey affordable housing development, with no parking provided for the residential units. This planning application had only two objectors. Over AUD\$200 million worth of further development, mostly of five to eight storey commercial and residential developments have been given planning approval by Council over the last 5 years. Council has developed a 'heights policy' across the business district which identifies the parts of the centre where taller buildings will be welcomed, and other areas where heritage values and potential impacts on neighbouring low rise residential properties mean development will be more constrained. Under these conditions most people don't have problems with ongoing high density development, though there is considerable debate about the amount of car parking which should be provided for such developments.

A recent success is the commitment from the state government to invest in a major upgrade of Footscray station and surrounds, and to facilitate private sector investment. However what is still required is significant improvements to public transport services,

particularly the frequency and speed of bus services, and frequency of rail services to nearby areas. It's all very well having a transit city at Footscray but if people who live two stations away in Yarraville are expected to choose to catch the train to Footscray then a better service than every 20 minutes during the day and every 30 minutes after 8pm is needed.

Who doesn't like TOD and why

Like those who support TOD the motivations of TOD 'resisters' are many, depending upon circumstance and locality specific issues. The concerns people have about TOD include:

- Dislike of change, and the closer to home the change is occurring, the stronger the passion. This fear or dislike of change may simply be based on a feeling that TOD developments don't belong in the area, with existing residents liking things the way they are.
- Fear of impact on their amenity and their lives.
- Loss of place and heritage and neighbourhood character, changes to things they value, and find comforting which give them a sense of a connection with an area and/or the past.
- Fear of traffic and parking chaos, either because they don't believe that the public transport improvements will happen or even if they do that people won't use the service.
- Concern about the development of natural environments, or in the case of 'brownfields' sites places that could be rehabilitated to have natural, recreational or open space value.
- Psychological attachment to the low density, high car use lifestyle. People feel that having a big house on a big block is what they aspire to and what they feel

embodies a high quality desirable neighbourhood. Many people also have a psychological and cultural attachment to cars, and a belief that high status equals a car. If people think they have bought into a lifestyle of 'big house, big block, open space and wide open roads' then TOD doesn't fit!

- Cynicism that TOD is just about developers making a lot of money at their community's expense

People who are concerned about TOD may not have an understanding of what TOD is trying to achieve, or may place low value and importance of the benefits of TOD, or are sceptical that the benefits will actually occur. There may be an allied lack of understanding that not everyone feels the same way, and a lack of belief that people can live lives where cars are not central to ones identity and being.

In summary TOD resisters feel strongly about keeping the status quo of place and people. They wish to protect their home from challenging impacts, which may include new different people, or living closer together than is desirable. This may reflect a desire to be able to control interactions with other people by only interacting with people that one chooses to interact with rather than enjoying spontaneous interactions with the whole diversity of society. They also value their car culture, particularly the individual freedom of car travel and allied scepticism of the value of public transport.

Some TOD resisters may see TOD as a Trojan horse. They may well be people who would otherwise value TOD and like living in such urban environments, but they don't believe that that's what they are going to get. They don't believe the improvements in public transport services are going to be sufficient to get people to substantially reduce their car use and so TOD is just an excuse for higher density development that otherwise wouldn't have been permitted to occur.

It's not necessary to have all or even most of these concerns to create quite an aversion to TOD, usually one on its own is quite sufficient! Here are two examples.

Example two Camberwell – keep the status quo.

In 2004 actors Barry Humphries and Geoffrey Rush protested along with 1000 others about a proposed development on the railway owned car park next to Camberwell station. Camberwell is a highly desirable inner eastern suburb of Melbourne, which features large period homes on large blocks on tree-lined streets. In general people live in and move to Camberwell because they like the comfortable, established lifestyle that it offers. Barry wrote this poem for the rally, and made headline news.

*I am a city planner and I've generally succeeded,
In giving Melbourne people things they never thought they needed,
I love to plan these projects (and they fill an entire shelf),
Provided that they're miles away from where I live myself.
We've got some groovy planners' buzzwords to convince you sceptic souls,
We talk of 'strategies' and 'options' and we love delivering 'goals'.
And if you enemies of progress make us put our plans on hold,
We talk vaguely about safety, wheelchair access and the old.
Now that several years have passed since the ministry's eye fell,
On that sleepy little suburb that is known as Camberwell.
And I have just walked down Burke Road at a pretty steady gallop -
For we planners very rarely see the sites that we develop.
Our mates at VicTrack told us the situation was no joke,
If it wasn't for Asian students the railways would go broke.
So they asked a kind developer to help them save their skin,
And that's about the point where my ministry stepped in.*

*Now confidentiality is what my job's about,
But we struck a bugger of a problem - the residents found out.
And that is why I'm standing here before you all today,
For progress is a fact of life that will not go away.
To us the whole of Melbourne is completely up for grabs,
And our developer of choice uses the best of concrete slabs.
And if you think we're vandals, you clearly haven't checked,
We put big pictures of how it used to be on all the streets we've wrecked.
So please don't try to stop us perform our rightful function,
Think of all the lovely traffic we'll be bringing to the junction.
And the retail opportunities for resident and renter,
And the mysterious activities in your new activity centre.
And we'll build a lovely plaza to entertain the local thugs,
Why should the kids of Camberwell go to Box Hill for their drugs?
And one day if you behave yourself we might even produce a picture of what you're
getting,
Meanwhile, I'm off to Noosa! (The Age, 2004a)*

Humphries was quoted in the article in The Melbourne 'Age' newspaper where this poem was reprinted as saying "I like Melbourne the way it is. Why spoil it?" "Camberwell is my spiritual resting place." Geoffrey Rush, who lives near the station, dubbed the likely impact of VicTrack's development proposal "Godzilla's footprint", with "all the character and charm of mid-1960s 'box' architecture". Rush feels that *Melbourne 2030*, is "a little driven by the crassness of developers' ideas" and "will fundamentally alter the tone and character of Melbourne in a way that I don't believe people are quite aware of". He fears the death of "that hidden, quiet, beautiful city

aesthetic". Rush stated that high-rise living was not "Melbourne's tone" and "not very Camberwell".(The Age, 2004b)

Mary Drost, the vice-president of the Boroondara Residents' Action Group, said the site was not suitable for residential development. She said a five-storey building would block city views, dominate the historic station and result in a loss of open space. "The huge thing would absolutely swamp the poor little station down there," Ms Drost said. "We are so opposed to it, it's just unbelievable" (The Age, 2004c) Boroondara Mayor Jack Wegman said "I think it would detract from the heritage qualities of the area" (op. cit.).

The protests about this development have been largely based on a desire to keep the status quo of a highly valued place. The community's concerns were exacerbated by initial inadequate consultation, and that the first design presented for the development was not sympathetic to the heritage listed station next door. Traffic impacts have also been identified as an issue. Camberwell residents have high rates of car ownership and use. However Camberwell is identified as a Principal Activity Centre for good reason, with trains every 5 minutes in peak and every 15 minutes out of peak, a tram service with a 10 minute frequency and a cross-suburban bus service (but that's a classic Melbourne bus service, it runs every half hour during peak, every hour out of peak, and finishes running at 6pm).

A year after the rally that Barry Humphries attended, the local Council considered and did not support a revised proposal for a five storey residential and commercial development. Two and a half years on, a new design for the site including two 6 and 7 storey buildings is about to be considered by Council, with the developer confident they "have it right this time, having responded to heritage concerns, with

buildings redesigned to protect views of the station ” (The Age, 2007) But Boroondara Residents Action Group spokeswoman Mary Drost said she was "absolutely appalled" with the latest plan. "This is worse than we expected," Ms Drost said. "Apart from a small strip of land near the station, the entire site will be covered in buildings and the ambience of Camberwell will be destroyed forever" (op cit).

Example three Sydenham: Protecting low density spaces, car culture and public transport scepticism

Sydenham is an outer suburban new development area. It's the fastest growing suburb in the Brimbank municipality, with 34,000 people living in the locality. The housing developments of Sydenham are classic low density outer suburban archetypes, with densities of just under four dwellings per hectare. It is one of the 'end of the line' Transit Cities identified under *Melbourne 2030*. Sydenham station is adjacent to Watergardens Shopping Centre. Car ownership is high (1.6 cars per household) and public transport use at under 7% of journeys to work lower than the Melbourne average (DSE, undated).

Brimbank Council and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) proposed a draft Masterplan for the Sydenham Transit City area in August 2004. The Masterplan proposes medium and high density development within 400m of the station and shopping centre, although it notes that "apartment living is a relatively new concept for Brimbank and that the demand for apartments is likely to remain small for the foreseeable future" (Brimbank City Council , 2005b).

The draft Masterplan was not well received. After a public outcry during the formal consultation period for the Masterplan, Council commissioned a more detailed consultative study (Brimbank City Council, 2005a). The outcomes of this study were very clear, and highly instructive for anyone considering superimposing or retrofitting

TOD in new low density growth areas. People did not think the medium-high density TOD concepts outlined in the Masterplan fitted with what they understood their neighbourhoods to be. They felt that the type of development outlined in the Masterplan would exacerbate the problems they already perceived as existing in their suburb, including the lack of physical and social infrastructure.

People were also unhappy with the consultation process itself, which to that stage had consisted of a questionnaire to residents and two consultation meetings. Many people felt that there had not been adequate consultation with the community prior to developing the plans, and not enough adequate consultation since the release of the plans. The study authors commented that this caused anxiety in the community and subsequent loss of faith in the process, and in government at both local and state levels.

The issue of gravest concern amongst the community was fear that medium/high density housing would negatively impact on neighbouring residents for reasons including loss of privacy; attracting undesirable people to the neighbourhood and creating a future slum area, loss of value of existing houses, unattractive design of units/town-houses, incompatibility with the existing suburb design and increasing traffic congestion. Comments included:

- I wouldn't live in a town centre. I like privacy. I like to make noise when I want to.
- More people, more neighbourhood problems.
- No units – they attract riff-raff, drugs, road hoons, people who do 'runners', robberies. We came here to get away from that.
- Units are untidy damn things. They don't mow their lawns. They let anybody rent them.
- My house will be worth nothing if all those flats get built.

- Multistory places are really ugly, drab. The architecture is really bad. Why can't they make them more attractive? More like homes. More like the other houses in the street
- Stick units in the city where they belong
- We lose the identity of our suburbs when units are built.
- Why do we need high levels of immigration, perhaps we could preserve the single dwelling way of life with a smaller population.
- More housing equals more cars. Most homes have two cars.
- Most people have to drive their kids to school. I feel sad for younger families in this area. It takes half an hour to take kids to school
- We're moving out of the area because of the traffic. I wouldn't want to raise kids here because of the traffic.
- More car parking is required. Current parking spaces at shopping centre and station are not enough.

(Brimbank City Council, 2005a).

Public transport was already seen as inadequate. Trains were reported to be overcrowded, and both bus and trains were considered to be too infrequent.

- Can't go from here to Laverton or Broadmeadows by train, have to go into the city and out again. It's stupid.
- If they want to encourage people to use PT why don't they improve the service, need a 20 minute service and the railway station is windy and not at all friendly.
- More buses would be good – I walk half an hour to the station.
- Bus takes a long time. It goes through every suburb to get to Moonee Ponds. They're encouraging people to use PT but it's just not adequate.
- Would like to use public transport but it's too hard

- You have to get in a car to do everything, shopping, taking the kids to school (otherwise they have to cross a freeway).
- Upgrade PT first before building more.

(Brimbank City Council, 2005a).

Many people expressed concern that infrastructure, social and leisure services had already failed to keep up with the growing population in the area, and consequently there was a lack of confidence that this trend would be reversed in the foreseeable future.

- There is no benefit in being a Transit City. It doesn't address social needs/issues.
- Taylors Lakes is very under serviced. Social services almost don't exist.
- We need a social plan.
- Increased population needs increased social services and infrastructure.

People's concerns relate to both higher density development in itself and also to the lifestyle that they thought they knew what they were buying in to when they moved to Sydenham. They may have been driven to move here because it was where they could afford, but they value the wide open spaces and the big blocks, and are fearful of what higher density means, who might it attract, how will it change people's perceptions of their wide open 'natural' suburban landscape. They like their new house, and they like their cars. They don't want to be too close to the neighbours. How many are sufferers of 'influenza' to quote Hamilton and Dennis of the Australia Institute, where people have a deep association between the acquisition of goods and a sense of self-worth. Their cars are likely to be significant contributors to their self image: 'the interface between the self and the world, the bridge between who we actually are and who we want to be seen to be' (Hamilton and Dennis, 2005). When people's experience of already inadequate

infrastructure is added to this underlying level of suspicion about higher density development then a potent combination is created.

The Sydenham Transit City Masterplan was adopted in September 2005, with some modifications. Council made an acknowledgement that ‘medium to high density housing in the Transit City area is a major concern for local residents’, and made a ‘commitment to protect existing residential areas from high density housing developments’. The Masterplan states that ‘Sydenham’s status as a Transit City will enable Council to seek improved commitments from the state government for investment in the area including improved transport and community facilities’ (Brimbank City Council, 2005b).

In summary it is stretching credulity to think that a transit city with high public transport use is going to develop here without not just major investment in public transport services and other infrastructure, but even more significantly substantial work on changing the culture

It’s worth emphasising the culture change which is going to be required for TOD to work in the outer suburbs of Australian cities. Graeme Davison (2004) makes it abundantly clear how car-based all post-war development in Melbourne has been, and how public transport systems since then have been merely considered a safety net for those who can’t drive, not a serious means of mass transportation. Davison notes:

‘It was along the cream brick frontier of the new middle class suburbs that the car-owning habit advanced furthest and fastest. In the 1960’s ... the suburban frontier .. advanced hand in hand with the rise of the two car household.’

‘The car brought a new sense of time and space to the city. It reinforced the suburban sprawl that had been a feature of Australian cities since colonial

times. It reshaped the suburbs, ..., transforming the regular oscillations of commuters from city to suburb into a more complex web of movements across the metropolis. It created a new engineering, a new architecture, a new aesthetic.'

'The car promised to give everyone access to their own bit of semi-rural seclusion, to offer Everyman and Everywoman their own little Eden'.

That's what we are up against in introducing transit oriented development to the outer suburbs. So many of the people who live here still want to live this dream.. Davison contends that this suburban dream has now begun to lose its allure. For some it has, but I contend that for your average outer suburban residents, the dream still holds true, and is reflected in their negative responses to higher density urban living in their dreamworld.

Further it will be a real challenge to increase public transport use for these residents. Other than for journeys to work for the small proportion of the workforce who both live near a train-line and work in the far distant CBD, people haven't experienced public transport working and simply don't believe in it. People settling in outer suburban Melbourne are likely to have grown up themselves on the frontiers of Melbourne 20 and 30 years ago. They didn't have public transport that worked then, and they haven't got it now. And the culture bombards them with the message that driving and owning the car of your dreams is fundamental to your existence. Why is it then surprising that public transport use in the outer suburbs is only in the 2-3 % of trips range? And why would we think that people living there could conceive that it is possible for it to be any different?

Building community support for TOD

So what can be done to increase community support for TOD in Australian cities? How do we reinforce the values and reasons and support for TOD and overcome the opposition? Reflecting on the underlying values and motivation of TOD supporters and resisters I think there are 4 critical directions. First, make sure it really is transit oriented development. In most cases in Australia that means substantial improvements in public transport as part of the development. The worst outcome, and what Melbournians fear the most is that we get the development but the public transport service falls way short of the mark in genuinely competing with the car.

Secondly, overcome the fears of traffic chaos and parking by challenging the car culture. That means not just good public transport but actively discriminating against cars in TOD zones. There are ample examples around Australia where good public transport is provided but the car culture remains. If there's abundant free parking, roads designed to be 'efficient' for cars and a wider culture of executives driving their company cars each day from public transport rich locales to the city then the traffic and parking chaos associated with the development are likely to be a reality.

Next, choose the site well. Start with the sites where there is a good chance of success – the Footscrays of the world. Once we have some TOD successes under our belt in Australian cities then it will be much easier to sell the concept to other places.

Finally, ensure there is excellent community involvement. Adopt best practice, using the expertise of excellent practitioners in community involvement. Best practice means quite a lot more than having a draft master plan out for public comment for a month. It takes time and costs money, but not much money compared to the dollars associated with the development, and not much money compared to what is spent or foregone in fighting against the community over many years. It's an investment that is likely to result in a supportive community working with Council and state government,

and most likely a better development given the wisdom of the community is taken into account. Provide a long lead time to give people time to get used to the idea, and to allow thorough extensive community involvement in the final design. Provide excellent information and education about why TOD is a good thing. This community education needs to be sophisticated, and have a context of the cultural change and behaviour change that is being asked for. Just producing a brochure and sending it out to the 'usual suspects' isn't going to be enough. Be upfront about what is being proposed, don't try and paper over aspects of the development that seem more controversial. As Barry Humphries said you'll strike a bugger of a problem when the residents find out. Negotiate with the community. Although this may result in a more modest development if it's supported by most of the community that's a huge achievement. Pushing through things regardless may work in the immediate circumstances but builds resentment and cynicism towards TOD in the future.

It is important to be genuine in your community engagement. It is people's homes and lives that are being planned. Respect their views, because everyone is entitled to their views and shouldn't have them ridden roughshod over. Instead of labeling all people who don't agree as troublemakers who need to be beaten, engage, understand, discuss and negotiate. Not everyone is likely to agree in the end, but if you have the majority in support the consultation will have built a good platform for further development in the future.

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