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Score One for the Green Guys

Published on **14 Apr 2011** | Written by **Aaron Lande** | Posted in **LEED**

In a scene we hope to see replicated in city council meeting rooms across the country, the Lakewood, Colo. City Council gave unanimous approval last month for the Lamar Station Transit Oriented Development (TOD) station project.

Why is this a momentous decision? The Lamar Station project, registered under the LEED for Neighborhood Development rating system, was met with a degree of reluctance. Fears that this proposed infill development would create a Manhattan-esque neighborhood of densely packed buildings led Lakewood residents to cry "NIMBY!" (Not in my backyard!) To allay those concerns, proponents of the project pointed out that Lamar Station is a LEED for Neighborhood Development registered project, encouraging greater walkability within and around the community, a sense of cohesion between neighbors, and the possibility of public transportation. These elements all lead to reduced automobile dependence. Given the current economic climate and high cost of gasoline, this is good news for Lakewood residents.

Cries of NIMBY soon turned to PIMBY: "Please, in my backyard!"

The cutting-edge Lamar Station project provides a game plan for how to overcome similar concerns elsewhere, because compact development is the future of this country and we need to find a way to get everyone on board. Given population prediction models, growth in the U.S. cannot be contained in low-density developments without consuming an ever-growing swath of land and resources, and contributing to climate change. More and more, we're realizing that in order to provide affordable housing for working families, and to meet residents' housing choices, high-density housing is required.

Here's how the Lamar Station project is accomplishing this objective: Located on the emerging west corridor light rail project out of Denver, the project will redevelop an under-utilized brownfield located in the center of an established neighborhood. It will feature a mix of affordable and market apartment units, public and community spaces, and access to a multi-modal transportation network. The project will be integrated into the surrounding community, and enhance it by embracing existing assets, transit-oriented development, and sustainability. Perhaps most importantly, given the current financial environment, the project has the potential to catalyze future investment and re-development of infill and environmentally contaminated properties along the light rail corridor.

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