

## Cleveland MOVE Roundtable Executive Summary

The Cleveland MOVE Roundtable took place from May 22 to June 26, 2023. The Roundtable was sponsored by Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and hosted by Matt Moss, Strategic Initiatives Manager, Cleveland Planning Commission.

### Context

- Cleveland was originally built to be a transit oriented and walkable city, with most of our urban space developed by the advent of the personal automobile. Remains of this history linger: wide, multi-lane streets, walkable and mix-used urban form; a hub and spoke transit network.
- Most structures in the city's neighborhoods are "existing nonconforming", meaning they cannot be rebuilt as they currently exist without zoning variances or discretionary review.
- Population density has fallen below the point which high frequency public transit service is financially viable – GCRTA currently runs an approximately ~\$30m operating deficit.
- Community engagement around new infill development is dominated by opposition opinions that stymie projects and make it difficult to add new housing in neighborhoods with old, hazardous housing stock and with low proximity to businesses and transit.

### Framing Question:

*Walkable, equitable, transit-oriented development is something we all say we want. Implementing these projects is often difficult, tense, and time consuming. Can implementation be easier, faster, and less tense? How can we effectively communicate our goals and actions to residents and stakeholders?*

### Goals of the Roundtable:

- Short term: philosophical/ideological alignment would put us well ahead of where we currently are, and potentially radiate across many different areas of the city's work. Perhaps even walking away with a sense of current policies/procedures/partnerships could be reworked around a framework for equitable TOD.
- Long term: we need to shift processes (change muscle memory of how things happen) to produce this outcome. That means realigning zoning code, prioritizing our funding, better integration with our transit authority on capital projects.

### Purpose/format

The Cleveland MOVE Roundtable was comprised of city, county and transit agency staff. With the draft TOD policy underway, the Roundtable presented an opportunity to convene a cohort to grapple with real implications of implementation, community engagement, and communications. The idea was to create alignment internally in preparation for sharing out ETOD to the broader community in a more unified and intentional way.

### Highlights: Weeks 1-5

In **Week 1**, the group kicked off its MOVE Roundtable engagement with a get-to-know-you session. Roundtable members shared with one another about their background and how they arrived in their current role, with frequent mention of a personal commitment to the city of Cleveland and improving opportunities for those who need it most.

In **Week 2/Mobility**, the Roundtable heard from Denver and Portland speakers who shared examples of city-transit agency alignment.

In **Week 3/Opportunity**, the Roundtable heard from Juan Sebastian Arias from the Chicago Mayor's office. Juan Sebastian highlighted coordinated efforts across city departments for TOD and shared about how the city is leveraging TOD to advance equity.



In **Week 4/Voice**, the Roundtable got a brief refresher course on effective communications (avoid use of jargon! Don't fall prey to the "everybody knows" fallacy!) and worked together to develop draft vision statements, which were further refined during Week 6.

In **Week 5/Equity**, the Roundtable focused on "the E in eTOD" with a presentation and small group exercise led by Race Forward.

In **Week 6**, the Roundtable continued ETOD definition discussions from Weeks 4 and 5.

### Initial Outcomes

At the concluding session, Cleveland Roundtable participants arrived at some shared statements:

- eTOD will look different depending on the neighborhood. In some, equity is to prevent displacement. In others, equity prevents exclusivity. Decision makers need to be open to history/reality of what equity means in different places.
- Moving forward with community requires both engagement and education. Ask what residents really want/need up front, because staff don't necessarily know. Neighborhood ambassadors are the most effective way to communicate with residents.

Participants also developed a definition statement based on the Cleveland 15 Minute City and the Roundtable Week 4/Voice discussion:

*ETOD/The 15 Minute City is an idea/vision that creates more opportunities for people in all of our neighborhoods to live where they want, get where they need to go, and enjoy everything Cleveland has to offer. This involves:*

- Expanding housing options in areas where people can choose how they get around
- Resourcing areas that need it more than others
- Transit/connectivity is a core value and focus
- Highlight sustainability (environmental and/or economic) – reinvesting in spaces
- Improves air quality and health
- Safety/convenience for parents/kids/elderly
- Amenities nearby for all (including drivers)

### Suggested next steps:

It's an exciting time for Cleveland TOD efforts: the draft policy is being reviewed and there's a strong cohort of dedicated city, county and transit agency staff who see the promise of what this can bring. It's also a moment of truth: the shift from policy to implementation, from paper to practice. Will Cleveland TOD attract more development interest? Will Cleveland residents view TOD as a return to its roots as a streetcar city or a change that feels like it's for someone else?

The main challenges/opportunities for Cleveland are:

1. Demographic differences (race, income) between decision-makers and residents
2. Variation in neighborhoods and what it will take in terms of investments to realize TOD
3. Strong community development corporations nestled throughout the city, but low resident engagement
4. Cleveland was originally designed as a TOD city for streetcars downtown

Based on the Roundtable and our experience in the transit/land use/community development space, Mpact would like to suggest the following:

- Leverage the advent of the TOD policy as a springboard for community engagement
  - Create a neighborhood ambassadors program to equip local resident leaders with information to share with their neighbors
  - Strengthen/build partnerships with organizations (faith communities, CDCs, CBOs) to create communication pathways (like a neural network) to connect with residents

- Consider identifying 1 or 2 target corridors/neighborhoods to provide an initial focus for investments and demonstrate scale and success
  - TOD isn't about one project but an ecosystem. Concentrating limited investment interest/resources to one or two specific areas allows these ecosystems to develop so people can experience what it's about.
- Pursue unified/coordinated messaging across city, county, and transit agency communications, including a shared narrative about what TOD can bring to different people in different situations
  - Residents want to understand what's happening, not get bogged down in differences across jurisdictional authorities. Creating a shared story allows residents to connect what's on the ground with the larger narrative to create powerful understanding.