

## Connecting a City: Transit-Oriented Development in Denver

The largest public transit expansion in the country is happening in Denver.

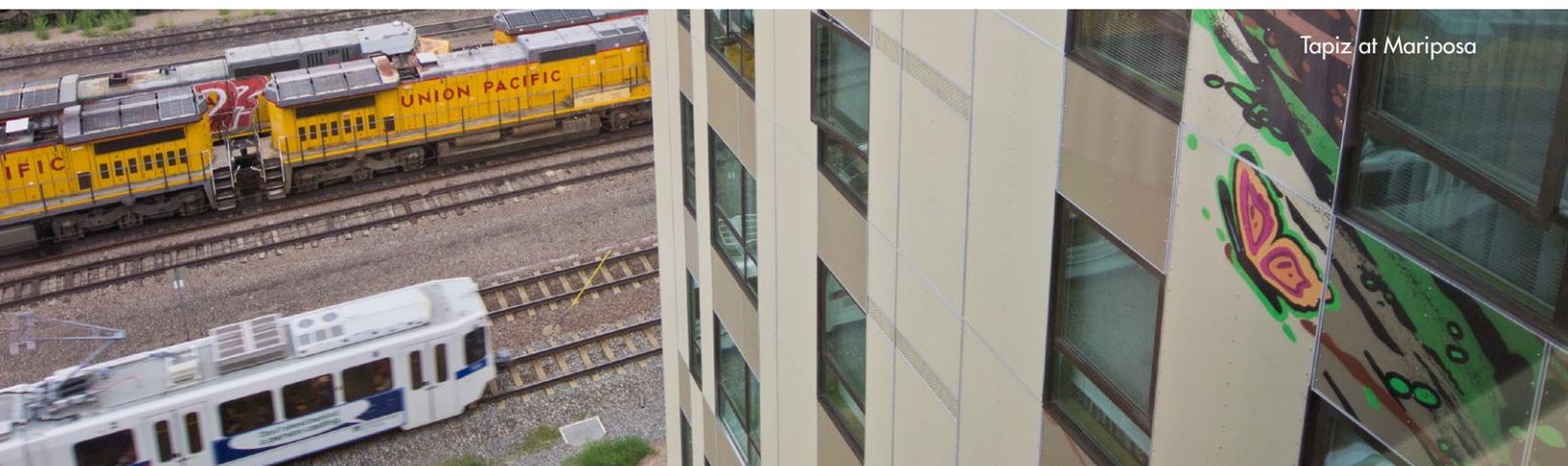
The city is adding new light rail lines to create a total of nine active lines, serving new neighborhoods, creating connections to crucial bus routes, and helping Denver families reach schools, restaurants, jobs, museums and parks more easily. Expanded opportunities for public transit use can make a big difference in the lives of the city's low-income residents.

Working alongside key partners, Enterprise is creating and preserving over 1,000 affordable homes in Denver through the \$15 million Denver Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Fund. The fund is designed to purchase and hold land alongside transit corridors – land that typically becomes more expensive and desirable when new rail lines arrive. The first of its kind, the pioneering fund has acquired seven sites for affordable development and provides a blueprint for other cities looking to do the same.

In the United States, transit costs – both in time and money – are on the rise. On average, people live over 90 minutes away from most work opportunities, while more and more jobs are moving into outer urban areas that lack access to public transit. The growing gap between where people live and where they work often forces low-income families to buy cars and purchase gasoline that they otherwise wouldn't need, straining household budgets. On average, for every \$1 a family saves by moving to more affordable housing, they spend 77 cents commuting back to their jobs.

In Denver, working families who earn between \$20,000 and \$55,000 spend about 60 percent of their total household income on housing and transportation combined. By switching to public transit, the average driver in Denver could save \$834 a month, or more than \$10,000 a year – money that could be saved or spent on healthy food or education.

For seniors and people with disabilities, access to train or bus services can mean mobility and independence. Tapiz, a TOD affordable housing development for seniors next to the 10th & Osage light rail station was developed by the Denver Housing Authority. It showcases what all future TOD properties will offer residents, young and old: self-sufficiency in an affordable, accessible building.



The Denver TOD Fund is designed to ensure affordable communities like Tapiz continue to develop near light rail and bus lines – an increasingly important task as the use of public transit grows. Between 1995 and 2010, public transportation ridership increased by 31 percent in the United States. Meanwhile, gasoline prices rose more than 250 percent.

Given these trends, housing near transit will continue to become more desirable: between 2006 and 2030, the demand for housing near transit in Denver is expected to increase by 344 percent. To ensure low-income residents have access to public transit, it's crucial to acquire strategically located properties and preserve their affordability before market prices rise.

Through the Denver TOD Fund, Enterprise, in partnership with the city, the Urban Land Conservancy and many others, is putting expanded transit opportunities within everyone's reach.

### **For Berda Steen, Accessible Transportation is Just the Ticket**

Being able to travel by light rail allows Berda Steen to do just about everything, from running errands to visiting the doctor to finding a peaceful moment in a nearby park.

Steen, 58, is a Texas native and resident of the Tapiz affordable housing community. Now that her children are grown, Steen believes that Tapiz offers the perfect home base for her new goals. Chief among them: obtaining her GED this year, through classes targeted specifically for residents at Tapiz. She even has her cap and gown ready to go.



Berda Steen



Tapiz at Mariposa

Outside of the classroom, Steen loves to attend outdoor blues concerts and visit local museums, all accessible thanks to public transit.

Once Steen graduates, she plans to operate her own business. In the meantime, the community at Tapiz offers a strong support system of friends and staff to help her stay focused and positive.

For Steen, community and transportation go hand in hand: her neighbors offer a foundation and fellowship, while the train provides much-needed independence. As the H line rumbles by, Steen smiles broadly. “You see my train?” she asks. “I just go right over there and hop on it.”