



IMAGE COURTESY OF KEPHART

THE CONTEMPORARY DESIGN OF THE BUILDING ALONG WITH WIDE DETACHED WALKS AND TREE LAWNS CREATES A STIMULATING PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE AND ADDS CONNECTIVITY THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY.

TRANSIT-ORIENTED COMMUNITIES REACH BEYOND PROPERTY LINES

A growing segment of Denver's multi-family market is transit-oriented development communities. While a number of definitions exist for TOD, most involve some metric describing walkability, some form of transit and, of course, some balance of mixed use. As Denver's FasTracks launch has emerged, TOD growth has occurred at many light rail stations.

Our office has designed a number of successful residential developments at these locations. They leased up well, sold ahead of pro forma and continue to increase in value. But on reflection, many of these earlier projects lack connection to the communities they were attempting to create.

As TOD design has evolved, it's clear the more successful projects are those reaching out beyond their property lines to allow for meaningful connections – both outbound, toward destinations in the vicinity, and inbound, providing pedestrian circulation through the community. In fact, we have begun to drop the term "TOD" from our vocabulary in favor of "TOC": transit-oriented community. Thinking of development in terms of placemaking is a strong start toward creating community. Just as important is allowing for connections to adjacent developments – the neighbors. We believe that as designers and their clients continue to recognize the value of community over project-centric development, better places for people will result.

Located adjacent to the Dry Creek Station on light rail's Southeast Corridor, Metropolitan Homes' Vallagio at Inverness is a good TOC example. No other locations in the metro area link resort style living, loft living, retail, golf course and office park within easy walking distance to a light rail station. Vallagio is detailed with a system of landscaped and hardscaped outdoor spaces interconnected

throughout the community; Nuszer Kopatz thoughtfully detailed these spaces, and the result is a community with unique gathering places for residents as well as neighbors to enjoy.

Another TOC example is Arista in Broomfield. Klipp's vision for this master plan truly embraces community. Large yet intimate gathering spaces, thoughtfully placed, permeate the site, adding value for those building in this community. At Trammell Crow Residential's Alexan apartment community, our design advantageously links park spaces to the north and south, resulting in a park amenity that stretches through the community. This same strategy, if employed by others at Arista, will yield greater livability for residents and visitors.

If you're currently considering a TOD or have one under way, step back and look at it in context of the surrounding community, as a TOC. This approach could mean adding a sidewalk or pocket park, or increasing setbacks, allowing enhanced pedestrian scaled detailing; quite often a series of small scaled adjustments can yield results greater than the sum of its parts.

As more of us consider our work in terms of TOC rather than "one-off" developments, Denver's light rail stations will evolve into a series of sought-after places to live, work and play. These communities hold their value over time and create greater livability for their residents. 🏠

Paul Campbell, AIA, is president of KEPHART, a nationally recognized community design firm that focuses on designing communities that are great neighborhoods. The KEPHART team has designed planned communities, single family and multi-family housing with uncommon sensitivity to public concerns, environmental diversity and builder profitability. For more information, visit www.kephart.com.