

# ideas

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## Transit-Oriented Communities



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# On Track with Transit-Oriented Communities



**The Lincoln Square Lofts provide spectacular views of the front range, and close proximity to “Fast Tracks” yields fast sales.**

**A** growing segment of the multifamily market are communities designed as part of a Transit Oriented Development (TOD). Traditionally these projects are built at very high densities and take on a commercial aesthetic. The sites are primarily in urban areas and there are commercial uses integrated into the neighborhoods that evolve around the transit stops. These buildings are not done with “sticks” and consequently a large segment of the multifamily builder community doesn’t typically go there.

That notion is continually evolving into more communities that are being built in TODs at moderate densities. Not all sites will command the high prices that the more sophisticated construction types require. Not all sites should get developed at the higher densities due to existing topography, view or contextual conditions. Not all sites have been created to attract high density development

solutions. These conditions are where opportunities for the conventional frame builder exist. What follows is a description of how three communities were created in TODs at modest densities well below their big brothers.

## **Lincoln Square Lofts – Lone Tree, Colorado**

Denver is in the midst of developing its light rail system, which started in 1994 and is projected to be completed in 2020. Its southern leg is anchored at Lincoln Station and today has a five-story parking structure poised to accept growth in ridership projected for the station. Trammel Crow Residential (TCR) looked at a problem site located 1/4 mile away. The problem was the significant topography across the small four-acre site. Additionally, a storm sewer and other utilities running in less than desirable locations further hampered potential development. There were a number of condos being built in the

area; none had such direct access to a light rail stop. TCR's direction was to solve the site conditions and construct in a way that would allow them to sell at a price point below what was already happening around them. What resulted was a combination of commercial and residential strategies. An elevated post tension concrete slab was used for underground parking. It was built as a walkout in order to access a lower parking lot. This took up slope and allowed for the frame construction to be built on a level surface. Enhanced fire protection systems were utilized to offset limited access on the downhill side. The residential frame construction was done in typical fashion for the area, yielding predictable construction schedules. The result was an offering of homes that were able to sell at up to 10% below area comparables while still meeting proforma requirements. The community was the first to sell out along the southern line. A majority of the homes have great views of Colorado's Front Range. Exterior detailing takes on an urban character featuring balconies that are detailed in steel.



**Lincoln Square Lofts' attractive detailing with an industrial edge reinforces the notion of loft living.**

campus in exchange for development of under utilized portions of their site. This unique partnership spurred an equally unique site plan. Views to the Hudson are spectacular and set the vocabulary for what most described as a resort like setting. An extensive system of pedestrian trails provides access to a commuter overpass which provides direct access to the station. Views from outside the site were also important.

Buildings were clustered to save large stands of trees. Massing of the buildings was limited to three stories in order to minimize visual impact from off site. A building concept to stack townhomes allowed for homes that could take advantage of the walkout condition that existed on all building sites.

The development of Riverbend has had a substantial positive impact on property values and the economy of local businesses. Strong sales led to price increases, setting records for the area and necessitated an accelerated construction schedule.

### Riverbend – Peekskill, New York

The city of Peekskill is an old Hudson River industrial town. This site owned by the sisters of St. Francis is well-known locally and is located within walking distance of a commuter station and the historic downtown area. A site with significant topography again had stymied previous attempts at development. The developer, Ginsburg Development Company (GDC) recognized the value of introducing housing to a location with such proximity to transit.

The campus of existing structures on the convent site had fallen into various stages of disrepair. GDC structured a partnership with the sisters to refurbish and add to their

### Vallagio – Inverness, Colorado

Back in Denver, Metropolitan Homes is building Vallagio Inverness located at one of the light rail stations being built as part of Denver's Fast Track program. Everything about this development says quality community. As you look at TODs around the country, it is hard to find any that link resort style living, loft living, retail, golf course, and office park all within walking distance of a light rail station.

**The Vallagio condominiums all have oversized outdoor spaces.**



**Riverbend, with its lush greenery and open spaces, isn't your typical transit-oriented development.**



Photos courtesy of ©2006 Steve Hinds, Inc.

Metropolitan has created a mix of town-homes, flats and lofts, all constructed in light frame which is traditionally what the company has been known for. The community has been detailed with a system of landscaped and hardscaped outdoor spaces that are interconnected. Exteriors are all maintenance free, which has been a huge hit with buyers, many looking for a “lock and leave” kind of home.

All three projects have the TOD theme in common. Each was executed with conventional frame construction at densities ranging from 14 to 33 dwelling units per acre. The size of builder ranged from local to large national. Trammel Crow Residential in Denver

has gone on to specialize in communities with T.O.D. connections. Many planning departments look favorably on residential development adjacent to light rail stations. We see a continued trend for residential development near transit stations and note that they are great opportunities for builders that work with light frame as well as commercial construction methods. **smi**

**Paul Campbell's** vision, as president of KEPHART, focuses on designing communities that are great neighborhoods. His leadership and commitment to quality housing design inspire each team member to tap their exceptional skills. Through his open communication and creative thinking, KEPHART and its builder partners continue to find success in the home building industry. Paul has lead KEPHART to be a nationally recognized community design firm. The KEPHART team has designed planned communities, single family and multi-family housing with uncommon sensitivity to municipal concerns, environmental diversity and builder profitability. For more information please visit [www.kephart.com](http://www.kephart.com).

**Riverbend's Commuter line is connected to the site with a system of pedestrian trails.**



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