

EDITORIAL

ISLAND VOICES

# Smart Growth ideas will help guide transit-oriented development

By Jesse K. Souki

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In partnership with Smart Growth America, the state Office of Planning prepared a report entitled, "Leveraging State Agency Involvement in Transit-Oriented Development to Strengthen Hawaii's Economy" (see <http://goo.gl/tNEFQ>).

We brought together various city and state, private and community stakeholder representatives to discuss ways that state agencies can leverage transit-oriented development (TOD) to maximize benefits.

Whatever you think about the Honolulu rail project, the fact of the matter is that there is a significant amount of state-owned land within a half-mile walking distance of the proposed transit stations. What does a future with rail and state properties around it look like?

We asked state agencies to consider their roles as major property owner, largest state employer and service provider. The recommendations in the report are based on those interagency discussions.

The report encourages using a Smart Growth approach because of its many community and environmental benefits. These principles are supported, for example, by the U.S. Environmental



Protection Agency, Department of Transportation and Department of Housing and Urban Development.

We matched Smart Growth principles with TOD elements and the Abercrombie administration's "New Day" priorities to help guide better decision-making.

For example, one principle is to create a range of housing opportunities and choices. This aligns with the TOD element to "incorporate a range of housing and employment building types based on local character and the transit station area's role within the transit network market area," which in turn supports the New Day agenda item "ensuring access to affordable housing and human services."

There are several of these connections we make on page 6 of the report, which reduces our dependence on fossil fuels, creates healthier communities and preserves and protects open space and agricultural lands.

Nowhere in our report do we recommend planning, permitting or environmental exemptions of any kind, as incorrectly suggested by some. TOD is simply a method for developing communities in a way that maximizes the use of public transit.

In the context of TOD, there also seems to be a misunderstanding about what public-private partnerships (PPP) are.

PPPs are merely one method for delivering public projects that allows a public entity to share in the risks and rewards of public projects with the private sector.

PPPs have been used in other states for housing projects, waterfront projects, airport improvements and all variety of public projects. It would be a mistake to write off PPPs.



In the December 2012 publication of *Governing*, experts predict an increase in the use of PPPs by state and local governments as they become more strapped for cash.

The report is not the end of the discussion. And no matter what tool is used to deliver public projects, successful public projects depend on community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions — another Smart Growth principle.

The 10 basic Smart Growth principles are a good starting place for delivering public projects and are discussed on the EPA's website at [http://www.epa.gov/dced/about\\_sg.htm](http://www.epa.gov/dced/about_sg.htm).

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