

# DIVISION<sup>U</sup>

U N I T E D



## A Toolkit for Transit-Oriented Development





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# Introduction

Hello! Thank you for volunteering your time to be a part of the Division United conversation, a Bus-Rapid Transit Corridor Study for the Silver Line Route on Division Avenue.

The purpose of this study is to find ways to improve affordable housing options, business opportunities, and neighborhood conditions in the corridor without losing our diversity and values. Our study area (shown in the map on the following page in green) is approximately 1/2 mile around the Silver Line bus stops between 60th Street and Wealthy Street. This study looks for opportunities along the Silver Line (BRT) bus line (along Division Avenue South) within the study area and examines how local policy and development can help them along.

This document is a resource or a cheat sheet for you to learn more about the project, its purpose and how it can help improve our community. In it, we hope to accomplish three things:

1. Describe Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
2. Explain ways in which TOD can change the Division Street Corridor for the better
3. Explain the project process, timeline, and what we need from you
4. Give you resources to share this information with the community.

If you have any additional questions, feel free to contact Lynee Wells at 616-648-3534 or Synia Jordan at 616-633-0580.

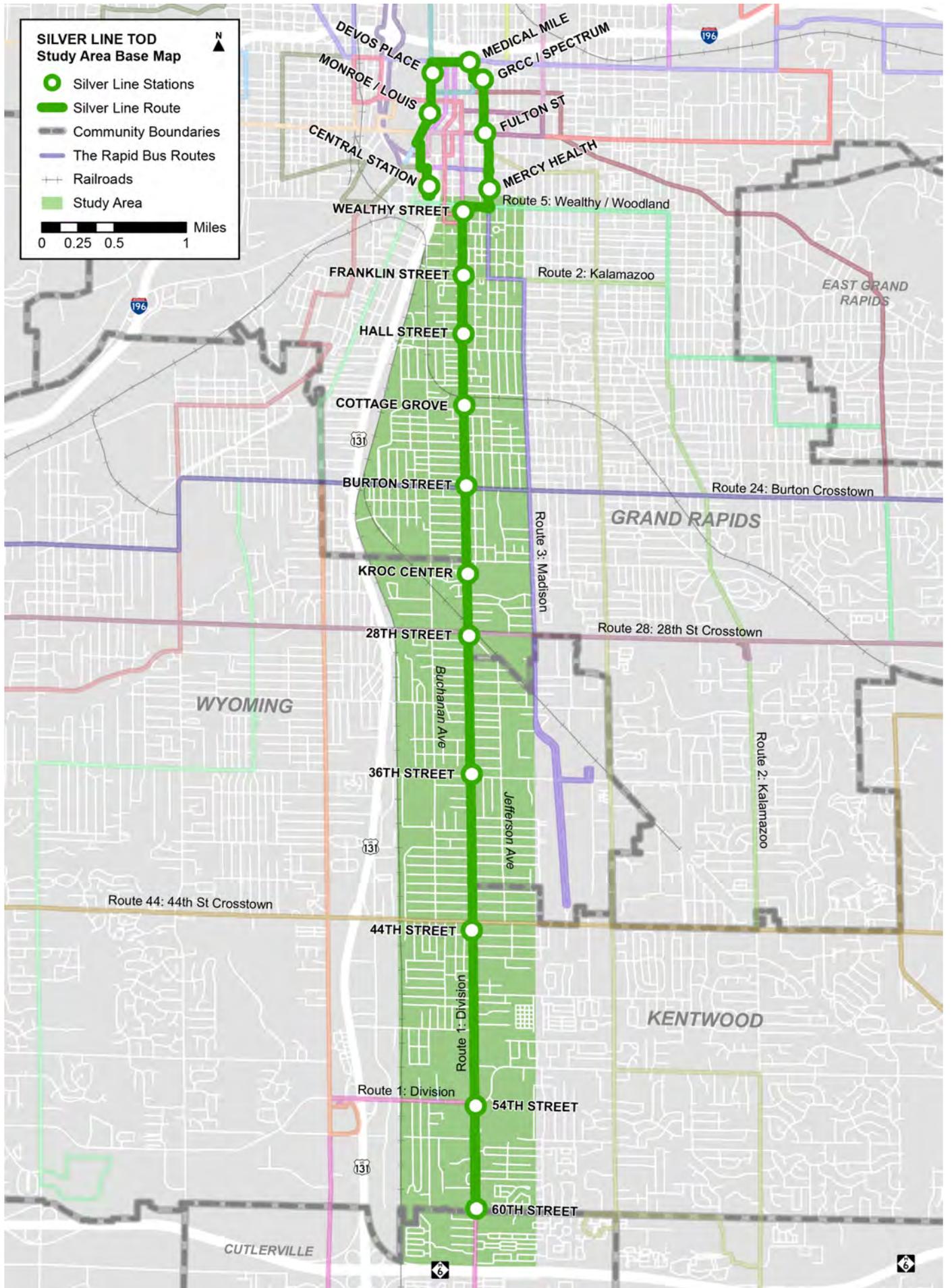
[www.divisionunited.org](http://www.divisionunited.org)



**SILVER LINE TOD  
Study Area Base Map**

-  Silver Line Stations
-  Silver Line Route
-  Community Boundaries
-  The Rapid Bus Routes
-  Railroads
-  Study Area

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



# Project Orientation

- What is TOD?
- How Can TOD Help You and Your Neighborhood?
- How does this Project Build on Previous Studies?
- How is this Project Different From Previous Studies?

## 1. What is Transit Oriented Development ?

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is a type of development in cities that increases the amount of homes, businesses, shops and leisure spaces within walking distance of public transport. (In our case, the public transportation is the transit stops along the Silver Line Bus Rapid Transit, or BRT corridor!)



### Transit Oriented Development vs Typical Development:

How is transit-oriented development different from typical development? In order to answer this question, we have to look at the way cities and communities have been designed both historically and recently. In the days before cars, when people mostly go around by foot (or perhaps by streetcar or bike) cities were compact. Many important destinations, such as work, school, or the grocery store, were located close to where people lived (think of this when older folks tell you about how they used to walk to school in 3 feet of snow!).



After the 1950s, right after cars became affordable for regular people, municipalities and private developers both started to change the way they designed and built cities. First, since

people could get much farther much faster in a car, communities were built in a much more spread-out way (we call this 'sprawl'). As land developers created new subdivisions in places away from the central city (the farther out the land, the cheaper it usually was) these new communities were less connected to the urban core and more car dependent. Second, new developments and communities were often created with single use: a big industrial park, a single-family subdivision, and so on. It's cheaper to build a lot of the same thing all at once, and so many developments were made to serve

In short, many cities in America are designed as though every person has a car, wants to drive, and is ok with driving far for the things they need. We now know that this lifestyle is poor for our health, imposes a financial burden on citizens (the costs of car insurance, gas) and keeps us stuck in traffic all day. TOD projects try to change this. TOD projects do not get rid of cars, or the choice to use cars, but try to create opportunities for people to CHOSE other ways to get around and to give people options about the types of place they live in or next to.

### What are the elements of TOD?

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is often described as a type of urban



development that is high density, mixed-use and mixed income, and within walking distance of a public transport system. Successful TODs create good pedestrian and biking environments and result in compact communities. Let's break down the components of a transit-oriented development—the elements that make it up, the relationship they have to each other, and the benefits they bring.

Reliable, high quality bus service:

Instead of depending on a car or a person with a car to drive them around, people access the places they need to reach by bus efficiently and at an affordable cost. The bus is reliable with frequent and dependable service.

Walkable/ bikeable communities:

A walkable/bikeable community is a place with walking and biking routes that are safe, convenient and have route options that are shorter than driving to those places. Public spaces, including bus shelters, are vibrant, safe and accessible to people of all ages and disabilities and in all weather conditions.

Mixed-income and mixed use:

Mixed-income means there are housing options and office/business leasing

spaces for all income levels. We don't want any new development to be so expensive that our neighbors can't afford them, and we want to create places that hospitable to people regardless of their age, ethnicity, education, employment, or special needs. Variety is good! Mixed-use means each block has a variety of uses from housing, offices, shops, restaurants to maybe even health clinics.

High Density Development:

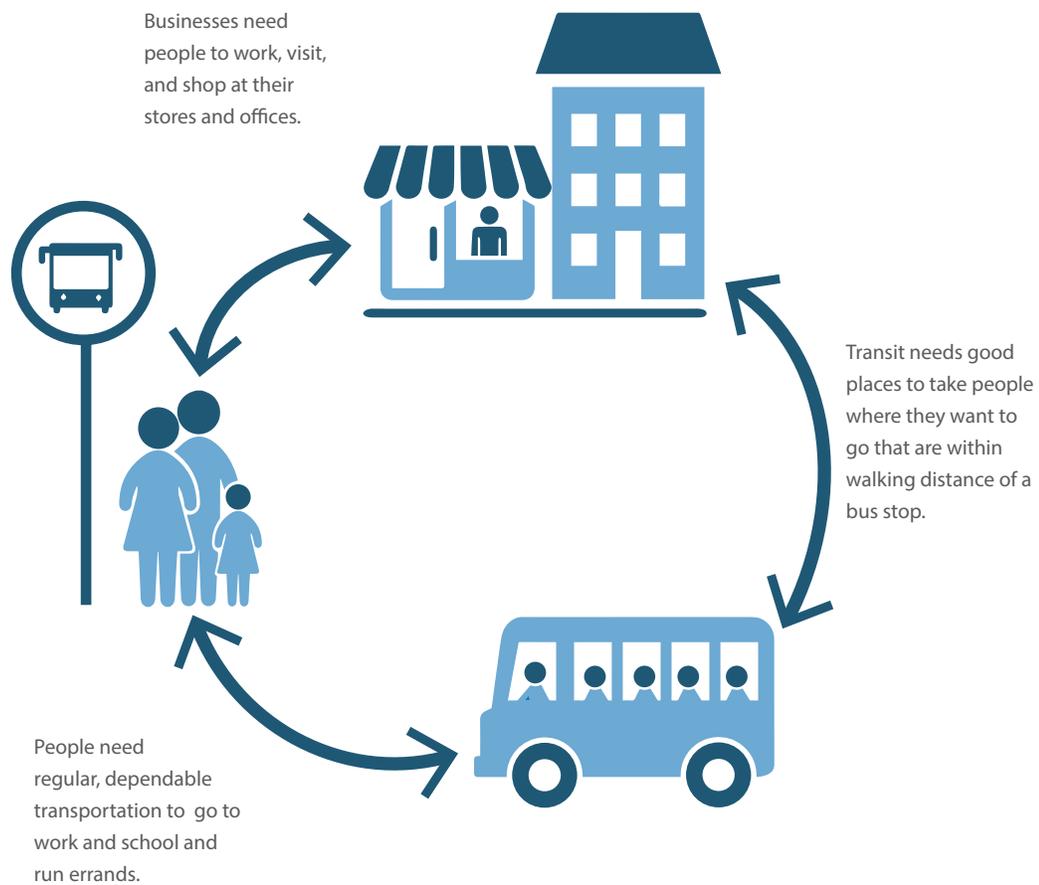
High-density spaces are spaces that can fit a lot of people in a small area. Typically, this means taller buildings with more floors. In a TOD, buildings around the bus stops will often be more than three floors high. This means more people who live and work in these buildings will have access to the bus stop. Usually the ground floors will be lined with businesses, shops and restaurants.

Compact communities :

Compact communities organize the elements above in a logical and efficient way to maximize space for people to work and play and minimize the land occupied by cars. means space that would be given to parking can now be used for other things such as better sidewalks, parks or community veggie gardens. through the city is more convenient (no need to sit in traffic when you take the Silver Line!).

What does the Silver Line BRT bus route on Division Ave South have to do with this?

There is an opportunity for the bus route and the neighborhoods near the bus stops to work with each other. If there are more buildings and amenities of all kinds that are right outside the bus stop (say within a walkable distance of 1/4th) more people will ride the bus to reach these places. And conversely, the bus can connect a larger number of places you would want to visit! And this will also help bring more people to your businesses. The below diagram shows the relationship between these three important elements—people, transportation, and buildings/places—in a TOD project.



In the larger picture, having all of these factors together in the same neighborhood will help us reduce traffic congestion, and improve our air quality. It will also help us fight climate change!

## 2. How can TOD help you and your neighborhood?

How can we work together to make our community better? We are working together with YOU (our ambassadors), residents, businesses of our community, The Rapids, the cities of Grand Rapids, Wyoming, and Kentwood and other stakeholders to identify concerns and solutions to for our community.

Our objective is to find ways to work together to improve our community without leaving anyone behind. At its core, we want to protect our neighborhoods from being displaced by big developments or increase in tax/rent but at the same time leverage opportunities to improve our quality of life. We want to preserve the unique character and diversity of our communities but also increase our access to better opportunities. We want to find ways to create more opportunities to access to jobs, affordable housing options, public spaces among other things. And we can

leverage the Silver Line BRT corridor to make these happen! After all, 'a rising tide lifts all boats.'

What would TOD in the Division Corridor look like if it was done in a fair and equitable way? Imagine living in a neighborhood where you can walk to the grocery store, your job is a bus ride away, there are plenty of affordable multifamily houses around you, it feels safe to walk around in the night (as there are plenty of neighbors out and about, there is adequate lighting, and places of interest are nearby). Imagine being able to easily reach a range of things you need (from restaurants, parks, to hairdresser or nail salons) all along Division Avenue South by walking to the bus stop and hopping on the Silver Line. When it's done well, TOD means equal access for all to local and citywide opportunities and resources at an affordable cost.

Below are some pictures of how this could look (and the elements it would include):



1

Good public and communal spaces, such as sidewalk cafes with shade, seating, encourage walking activity along the street

2

Bike infrastructure such as bike racks and lanes can encourage people who would not normally bike to try riding to close destinations.



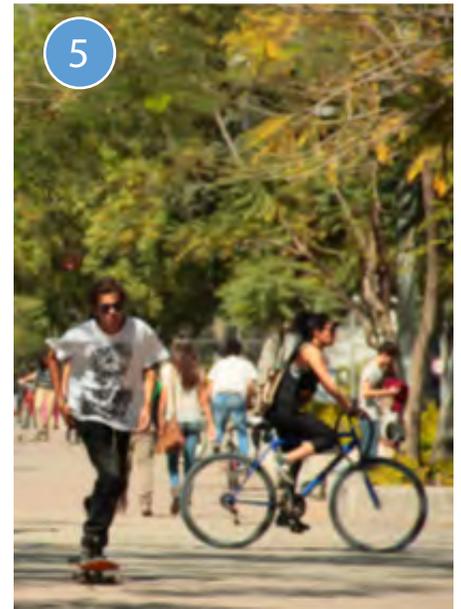
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Large plazas and tree covered outdoor spaces allow walkers and bikers to sit and rest between destinations.



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When people feel comfortable to use the right of way (including the street but also the area on the sidewalk) it can be a space for community. Active storefronts and small shops make the street a vibrant place to be.



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There are many ways of getting across the half-mile to a Silver Line stop. Scooters, bikes, and skateboards are just a few!



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Transit stations are one of the most important elements for successful BRT. If people don't feel safe and protected where they wait for the bus, they won't use the service. Making sure stations are inviting and that there are things to do nearby can help encourage more people to ride the Silver Line.



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In some cities, streets or alleys are converted to environments just for bikes or walkers--no cars.



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In some large cities, bulk delivery services (such as Amazon) are going back to using bike couriers to avoid the costs of traffic. This is only possible in places with a compact grid.



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TOD development should create spaces for young, and old, for work and recreation.

3. How does this project build upon previous studies?

The Silver Line TOD Strategy builds upon several previous studies and is both an opportunity to act and to plan. Here's how and why:

On South Division from Wealthy Street to 28th street, community stakeholders prepared an amendment to the City of Grand Rapids master plan called the South Division Corridor Area Specific Plan and followed the plan with the South Division and Grandville Avenue Corridor Improvement Plan . For this part of the corridor, the plans are prepared and a vision, with goals and objectives, has been cast. This TOD Strategy will help implement elements of these two documents as well as other documents like Vital Streets and the Bicycle Action Plan .

South of 28th Street, the cities of Kentwood and Wyoming are in the process of updating their master plans. The Silver Line TOD

Strategy will supplement their community-wide planning processes to create a vision for the area around each bus rapid transit station at 28th, 36th, 44th, 52nd and 60th. For more about these initiatives, check out Wyoming [Re]Imagined and the City of Kentwood Master Plan Update.

We will take recommendations, strategies, and visions of previous station area plans, and use them as the foundation for our development strategy and TOD strategy plan.

4. How is this study different from previous studies ?

This project is different from other TOD studies because rather than focusing on strategies to improve housing and retail development alone, the Silver Line BRT TOD focuses on revitalizing the corridor with an emphasis on NOT displacing existing residents and businesses. In other words, equity is a key component of this plan.

# Project Process

- Who is involved in this study and who is organizing this study?
- What is the project process and timeline?
- When and how can you be involved? What do we do with your input?
- How does Equity play into this project?

Who is involved in this study and who is organizing this study?

This is a team effort! And the biggest stakeholders are YOU (our Ambassadors), all the residents and businesses in our study area. A Steering committee with representatives from various organizations and businesses help guide the process. Along with the Rapids and the cities of Grand Rapids, Wyoming, and Kentwood are organizing this study, six different companies are bringing their expertise together to help organize this study.

What is the project process and timeline?

The project kicked off in October 2019 is scheduled to finish in December 2020. The Study will include the following steps.

1. Understand what is going on in our neighborhoods.
2. Listen to your concerns and solutions to come up with goals and objectives for this study.
3. Develop different strategies to these happen.
4. Identify ways to make all our recommendations a reality.

When and how can you be involved? What do we do with your input?

At each step of the way, we want to hear from you! Knowing that you are busy, the project team will find different ways for you to share your thoughts without being an inconvenience. We will ensure we can provide many avenues that are accessible to everyone in the community. Through online surveys, public meetings, or even events near bus stops. When needed we will make sure to provide food and kids play area so you can bring your entire family. Do be on a look out for more information!

Tell your friends, family, and co-workers about the project. This is your study and we want to make sure everyone has an opportunity to provide input!

Your input is what will create recommendations! We will gather your concerns, priorities, potential solutions and identifies ways to ensure they can be achieved. Your input will help guide the vision for the entire corridor.





DEVELOPMENT,  
URBAN DESIGN,  
TRANSPORTATION



DEVELOPMENT  
CODES



EQUITY &  
MOBILITY



STAKEHOLDER  
ENGAGEMENT  
& LAND USE



PLACEMAKING



NEIGHBORHOOD  
AMBASSADORS



# Implementation

- How does Equity play into the implementation of this project?
- What is Incremental Development and what are its benefits?
- What are Opportunity Zones?

How does Equity play into the implementation of this project?

Issues of equity, mobility, and development are all related, and any plan to improve this street will touch them all.

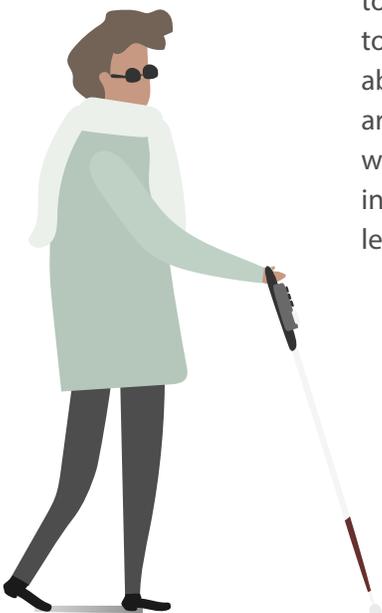
Division Avenue corridor's southern end has the highest total population in the three cities, and the greatest number of members depending on bus service compared with other bus routes. We know the neighborhoods have 43 percent Hispanic and 34 percent black, the rest white and mixed —and is a slowly declining neighborhood.

We need to find ways to help our community by providing the best opportunities and directing investment to support existing residents. In addition to getting feedback from our community about what they need and why, there are two additional tools that will help with equitable change: a strategy of incremental development, and the leveraging of opportunity zones.

What is Incremental Development and what are its benefits?

Incremental development is developing at a pace and scale that is in sync with the current community. Development happens fast enough to maintain momentum, but slow enough for each new stage of development to capitalize on the preceding stage.

- Allows communities to grow at their own pace – led by YOU (existing residents and businesses.)
- Builds based on internal demand, rather than outside market forces that may be geared more towards maximizing profits
- Improvements made with an economy of scale that matches the vision of the current residents and businesses
- Revitalizes communities with existing residents, businesses, and resources – rather than large scale projects that may change the face of the community
- Capitalizes on existing infrastructure to reduce the cost of new development and subsequent rents that may make the area less affordable for existing residents.
- Encourages small-scale and/or local developers to invest in the community.



The Silver Line TOD will be developed incrementally. Plan recommendations will be staged and scaled to support the natural growth and development of the community. Rather than incentivizing large-scale developers to invest in big projects that may drastically change the look and feel of the community, the Silver Line TOD will focus local and smaller scale developers to help maintain the integrity and affordability of the community.

What are Opportunity Zones?

The study area for the Silver Line project is located within a federally certified opportunity zone. These zones are located in areas with economic disadvantage. The study area, which is located in such a zone, has incentives in place in the form of tax breaks that will encourage developers and investors to create projects here.

What this means is that not only will people want to invest in our community, there is also a federal financial incentive for them to do so. By providing guidelines to potential investors and developers through this study, we can help decide what kind of development we want/need in our community. We can ensure the development benefits the entire community and doesn't impact us in negative ways.



Equality vs. Equity

# Some Tips When Talking to Others –

Some questions that may be asked about the Silver Line and suggested answers...

So you're ready to go out and talk to your community about BRT and TOD! Below are a few possible scenarios you may encounter when speaking to neighborhoods residents.

Questions	Answers
<p>What is BRT?</p>	<p>Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a high-quality bus-based transit system. For Grand Rapids, this means a convenient and reliable bus system that runs on its own 'bus only' lanes along Division Avenue to downtown Grand Rapids.</p> <p>Between 28th Street and Wealthy Street, Division Avenue has two "bus only" lanes which during peak hours only allow Silver Line buses passage. There are also bus lanes on Monroe Avenue and Michigan Street.</p> <p>This means no waiting and honking in traffic if you are trying to get to downtown when you take the bus!</p>
<p>Where does the Silver Line go?</p>	<p>The Silver Line route travels 9.6 miles mostly along Division Avenue from 60th Street on the Wyoming-Kentwood border, crossing into the City of Grand Rapids at 28th Street, and after Wealthy Street loops around the downtown area to Central Station in Grand Rapids.</p>
<p>How does riding the Silver Line work?</p>	<p>Planning –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check your route schedule online with RapidConnect System Map.</li> <li>• Download the myStop app.</li> <li>• Call 776-1100 and Choose Option.</li> </ul> <p>Fare – Pay for your ride either with cash or a Wave card. A single fare costs \$1.75, a day pass (valid until midnight) costs \$3.50. Weekly and monthly passes as well as 10-ride passes are available.</p> <p>Easy boarding - Board the bus at the front door; the rear door is for exiting passengers. If you have questions about whether you have the right bus or where your stop is located ask the bus driver</p>

Questions	Answers
What are the Silver Line hours?	<p>The Silver Line provides service 7 days a week, during similar hours to the rest of the Rapid network.</p> <p>Monday to Friday – from 5:07 am to midnight.</p> <p>The schedule varies on weekdays and weekends</p>
Can I park my car at a Silver Line stop?	<p>A Park’n’Ride facility is available at the at the southern terminus at 60th Street and Division. Parking at the facility is free!</p>
Is it safe to ride the Silver Line?	<p>Yes, riding the Silver Line is very safe. People ride the Rapid everyday every day without any safety problems. That’s thanks in large part to dedicated police force that keeps The Rapids safe and secure 24/7. There is patrol on all of our buses, and parking lots — preventing crime before it has the chance to happen and making sure you get to your destination safely.</p>
Is the Silver Line reliable?	<p>Given the number of people riding every single day, Silver Line has to be reliable. The system undergoes regular maintenance and inspection to keep it running in top shape. If something does happen that affects service, it will be update on the website and the Rapid team will find a way to quickly fix the problem.</p>

# Some Tips When Talking to Others –

Some valid concerns your audience might raise and pointers to help get the conversation back on track....

When discussing this study with friends, family members, and co-workers they may bring up valid concerns on other related topics. The following section provides suggestions for those concerns and helps get the conversation back on track...

IF This...	THEN That...
The Rapid is terrible! I can't go anywhere I want to!	Yes, you are right. The Rapids doesn't always connect us to where we need to go. However, a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) will help bring things out of your reach now, (such as grocery stores, health clinics etc.) closer to your door step. In the future, you may not have to travel as far to reach the things you need.
It's so cold and snows heavily in winter, I can't imagine taking the bus or walking anywhere!	You are right, I wouldn't want to be walking in slush either. All stakeholders and The Rapids know this won't work if there aren't covered shelters and walkways etc. to protect us from all that snow. Maybe you would consider walking if you could grab a coffee along the way? Or taking the bus if the stops are covered and heated?
But a car is so much more convenient!	You are right. But isn't it more convenient to not drive through traffic every day? Or not pay for parking? Or waste time trying to find parking spots? And imagine if things are so close by, you don't have to drive to reach them! You have the option of taking the bus or walking/biking.
I don't work downtown [OR] I can't find jobs downtown. This will not help me	A goal of this project is increase jobs along the Silver Line. So maybe in the future you could walk to work!
My rent/ taxes will go up! And I will be forced to leave! This sounds like another project that's forcing us to leave this neighborhood! Every time they start a project like this in a minority or low-income area, the people who originally lived here get kicked- out.	Everyone is aware of this. Which is why the goal of this project is find ways to make sure this doesn't happen! Feeling skeptical? Make sure you attend the public meetings, so your voice and concerns are heard. And you are part of finding solutions to make this happen.

IF This...	THEN That...
I live in the study area/ near the bus stop. Does this mean the government is going to take away my home/ business?	Not at all! In fact, you will be able to take advantage of all the new changes! The study will identify solutions to protect your homes and business while making the best use of vacant spaces around you.
We have a lot of other problems that need to be fixed first!	<p>Agreed. This study will not help solve all our problems and may not help solve a lot of things like our potholes or poor school districts. However, it can potentially help with a lot of other things! Some of these are –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More housing options</li> <li>More job opportunities</li> <li>More amenities closer to your door step</li> <li>More neighbors!</li> </ul>
Didn't we do this something similar a few years ago -nothing really came out of it?	<p>Maybe. And you are right, it feels like a lot of promises not kept. The difference with this study is that a big part of it is about identifying how to make the recommendations happen. The study will identify realistic solutions that the cities and can implement. And ways to pay for these!</p>

Thank you for reading this guide:  
We hope it helps you to understand this  
project better and to talk to people about  
it.

If you haven't taken a ride on the Silver  
Line yet, do give it a try!  
We promise it's a fun experience!

There is no need to sit in traffic, no need  
to pay for parking downtown and its at an  
affordable trip!



# The Silver Line TOD Strategy: FAQs



## What's the Silver Line Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Strategy?

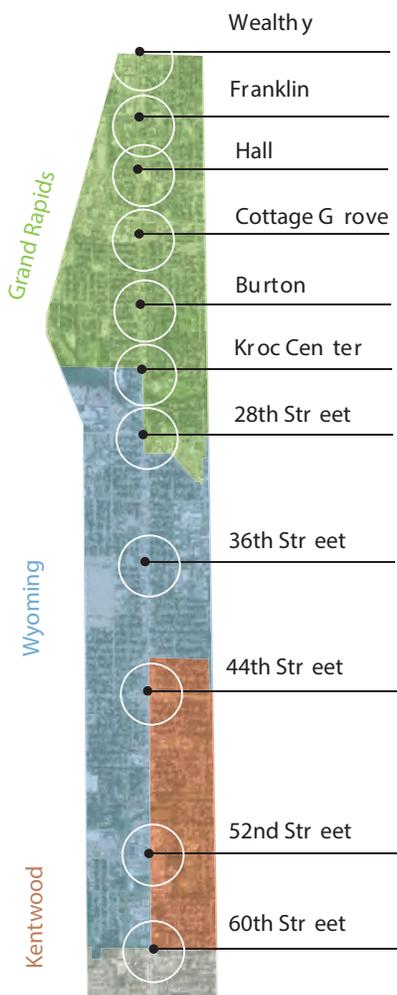
Throughout 2020, The Rapid and its partners, the cities of Grand Rapids, Wyoming and Kentwood, will be investigating the relationship between transit and land along the Silver Line bus rapid transit (BRT) corridor.

### What's the Study's purpose?

While the study has many parts, the overall goals include:

- Assessing the market conditions for housing, retail and employment uses
- Identifying the barriers to (and opportunities for) spurring economic development by prioritizing equitable development
- Developing planning policies, zoning recommendations, educational tools and initiatives that facilitate economic development
- Planning implementation of enhanced multi-modal connectivity, with a focus on bicycle and pedestrian facilities

## The Study Area

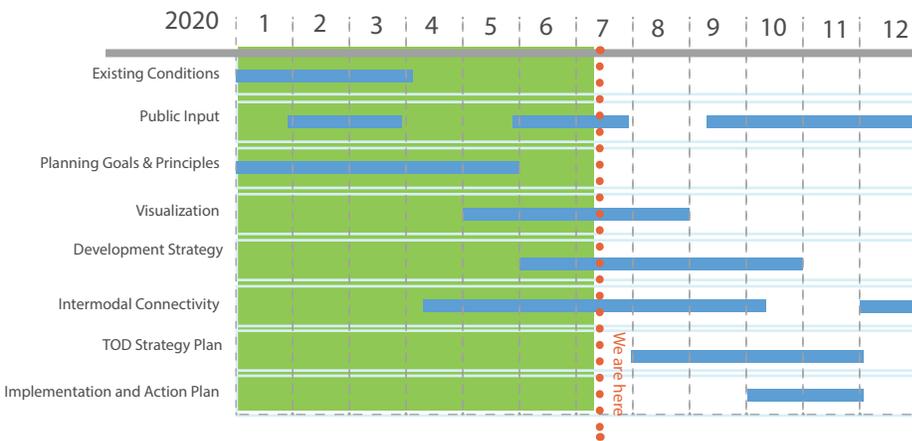


## Who is Involved in the Study?

The study is supported by The Rapid and the cities of Grand Rapids, Kentwood, and Wyoming. Representatives from these groups will act as an advisory committee. The study is being conducted by AECOM with support from Aligned Planning, EPIC, NspireGreen, Team Better Block, and JLS. A steering committee made up of key stakeholders from the community will provide guidance and feedback on the study as it progresses. The study will also rely on transit ambassadors. Transit Ambassadors, who are local community members from Wyoming, Kentwood and Grand Rapids, will work with the team to connect with those living, working and shopping on Division Avenue.

## What's the Schedule?

This project has eight parts (or tasks). Some tasks, such as public input, are ongoing throughout the project. Other components, such as the TOD Strategy Plan, will be developed later in the process after more information has been acquired. Currently, we are working on Task 1: Existing Corridor Conditions.



To learn more, please visit:  
[SilverLineTOD.org](http://SilverLineTOD.org)

# La Estrategia de Silver Line para Desarrollos Orientados al Tránsito: FAQs



## ¿Qué es la Estrategia de Silver Line para Desarrollos Orientados al Tránsito (TOD por sus siglas en inglés)?

Durante el 2020, The Rapid y sus socios las ciudades de Grand Rapids, Wyoming y Kentwood, estarán investigando la relación entre el tránsito y las tierras a lo largo del corredor del autobús de tránsito rápido (BRT por sus siglas en inglés) de la Línea Plateada.

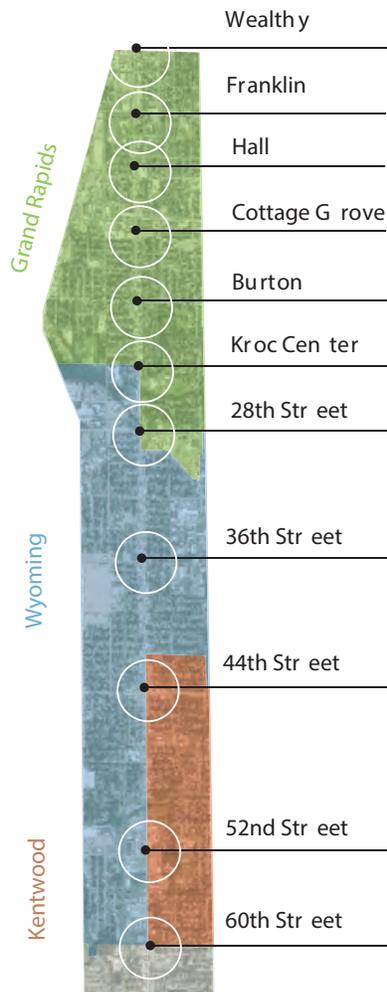
## ¿Cuál es el Propósito del Estudio?

Aunque el estudio tiene muchas partes, las metas principales incluyen:

- Evaluar las condiciones del mercado para el uso de viviendas, comercios y empleo.
- Identificar las barreras de (y oportunidades para) impulsar el desarrollo económico, priorizando el desarrollo equitativo.
- Desarrollar políticas de planeación, herramientas educacionales e iniciativas que faciliten el desarrollo económico.



## Área de Estudio

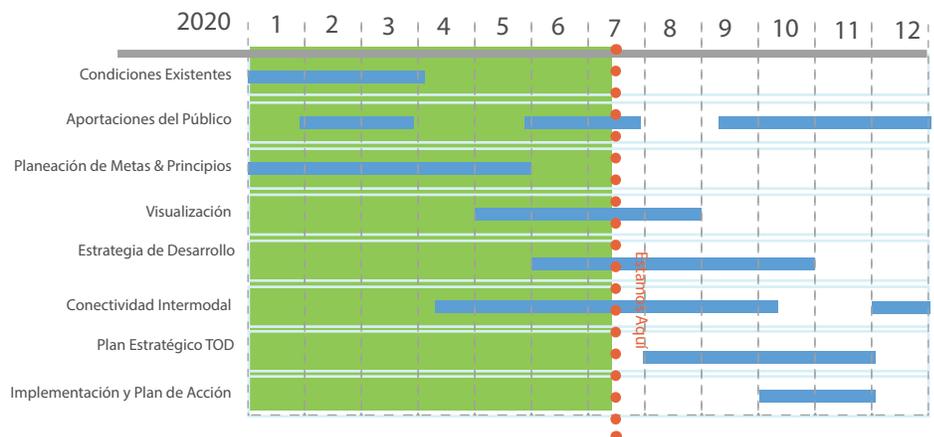


## ¿Quién está Involucrado en el Estudio?

El estudio está apoyado por The Rapid y las ciudades de Grand Rapids, Kentwood y Wyoming. Representantes de estos grupos actuarán como un comité de consejeros. El estudio lo llevará a cabo AECOM con apoyo de Aligned Planning, EPIC, NspireGreen, Team Better Block y JLS. Un comité compuesto por partes interesadas (stakeholders) de la comunidad proporcionará cierta dirección y retroalimentación conforme avance el estudio, el cual también dependerá de embajadores. Embajadores de Tránsito, quienes son miembros locales de las comunidades de Wyoming, Kentwood y Grand Rapids, trabajarán con el equipo para enlazarse con aquellos que viven, trabajarán y hacen compras en Division Avenue.

## ¿Cuál es el Calendario de Actividades?

Este proyecto tiene ocho partes (o tareas). Algunas tareas, tales como aportaciones del público, son continuas a lo largo del proyecto. Otros componentes, tales como el Plan Estratégico TOD, se desarrollarán posteriormente conforme se adquiera más información. Actualmente estamos trabajando en la Tarea 1: Condiciones Existentes del Corredor.



Para aprender más sobre el proyecto, consulte:

[Silver LineTOD.org](http://SilverLineTOD.org)