

sustainable development strategies but rather to propose a method for communities through which effective sustainable development strategies can be created. Recognizing that “sustainable development can differ significantly from one place or group to another,” they are concerned with presenting “a basic philosophy for participatory evaluation of sustainable development.”

The first five chapters lay the foundation for the final chapter. Chapter 1 is essentially devoted to explaining the need for this book, that is, why sustainable development requires an effective participatory process. In chapter 2, the authors focus on how goals and objectives are generated, requiring the asking of the appropriate questions and the selection of “good” indicators. Chapter 3 describes how data can be collected, with a brief paragraph covering a variety of “options,” such as brainstorming, focus groups, surveys, workshops, and so on. Ten criteria for the selection of the appropriate data collection option(s) are presented. In chapter 4, the authors discuss how qualitative and quantitative data should be analyzed and interpreted, involving a search for patterns in the case of the former and using descriptive and inferential statistics in the case of the latter. A case study is also included to show how citizens can participate in this aspect of the process. Chapter 5 presents a framework through which the quality of communications, both during and after the process, can be evaluated. In the final chapter, a fourteen-step guide is offered for the actual design and implementation of an evaluation plan.

To a considerable extent, Ukaga and Maser have recast the standard planning process under the label of *sustainable development*. There is little in this book that will be news to planners. And it (like any book) has its weaknesses. For example, in chapter 2, the authors use the word *variable* without defining it. The descriptions of the “options” for collecting data are too short to be useful. Similarly, the descriptions of statistical methods in chapter 4 are woefully inadequate, a weakness that is punctuated by the lack of suggested sources of additional information. And this suggests author uncertainty as to who their audience is: on one hand, planners already (presumably) know how to use statistics and so are not in need of these brief descriptions; on the other hand, laypersons need much more than that which is provided.

Still, this is the first book to specifically attempt to define a planning process that is based on sustainability, and the authors have done a credible job. The book is sprinkled with useful tidbits (such as the need for objectives to be *smart* and the six characteristics of an “effective question”). The case studies for the most part succeed as illustrations of how the various presented concepts and ideas translate in the real world. And

some of their remarks and comments are positively poetic (e.g., “amid the flotsam and jetsam of change in which the decay of the dying era seems, at least momentarily, to overwhelm the formative one”). So, while I wouldn’t recommend the book as required reading, I do feel that any planner would find it worth a look.

#### REFERENCE

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Hank Dittmar, and Gloria Ohland, eds. 2003. *The New Transit Town: Best Practices in Transit-Oriented Development*. Washington, DC: Island Press. 264 pp. \$55 and \$32. Hardcover and Paperback. ISBN: 1-55963-116-3 and 1-55963-117-1.

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The concept of transit-oriented development (TOD) has been an active part of planning discussions for more than a dozen years now. Most existing research reports, articles, or books to date, however, are only able to offer projections based on theory or assertion. The novelty of such planning initiatives precludes a full account of completed and mature projects. This has led to an active literature heavy on the forecasting or anticipation side but extremely light on the outcome side. The *New Transit Town* (edited by Dittmar and Ohland) offers readers an account contrary to this trend; it details matters of TOD planning that have come to fruition. By doing so, it offers a refreshing, up-to-date, and remarkably informative account of the TOD concept.

The twelve chapters of the edited book are divided into two sections. The first half provides chapters that update the reader on the TOD concept and address different dimensions of TODs. These dimensions focus on describing the actors, regulations, financing, and traffic/parking issues. The second half of the book chronicles five different completed TODs from different parts of the country, including the Washington, D.C., area, Dallas, Atlanta, San Jose, and San Diego. The intent is to depict the first generation of TOD projects and derive lessons for the next generation. The book claims to take a middle-path approach through TOD debates, examining the limitations of TOD and setting guidelines for new projects.

As an academic interested in various writings and interpretations of the TOD concept, I found the first two chapters (in which Dittmar took the lead) to be the high note. The reason is that the writing was disciplined and grounded in the existing reality of largely auto-based metropolitan development. These opening chapters satisfactorily stressed the middle path the book claims to assume. Dittmar and his colleagues describe the burgeoning—and exciting—role TODs play in contemporary planning situations; at the same time, the discussion was tempered by the imposing backdrop of traditional development (i.e., conventional suburban) in the United States. Furthermore, chapter 2 recognizes distinctly different types of TODs (e.g., urban downtown versus suburban neighborhood) and suggests how the proposed typology could be applied. The typology of TODs offered avoids the problem of establishing a hard definition of TODs, contending that it is appropriate to identify performance and descriptive benchmarks.

The bulk of the rest of the book is most accurately depicted by its subtitle: *Best Practices*. These best practices come in the form of four chapters about different TOD dimensions and the five case studies. Chapter 3 covers the actors of TOD, describing the role of transit agencies, riders, neighbors, local and federal government, and developers. The chapter on regulations addresses zoning issues and explains the merits of a skeleton approach that claims to address and accommodate myriad conditions. The financing chapter—the longest in the book—has a strong primer tone. It describes the challenges to financing TOD, the various strategies, and suggestions for making it easier to do so. Chapter 6 on traffic and parking is descriptive in nature; it covers the transportation dimensions of TODs, some design principles, the role of parking, performance measures, and challenges imposed by existing regulations.

Using a case study approach, the second part richly depicts five development projects that are complete and varied in their approach. It is difficult to prepare detailed case studies that allow similar enough themes yet allow readers to compare and contrast advantages and disadvantages that may differ considerably between projects. The five case studies are exemplary in this respect; particularly useful were the final sections from each of the case studies that described lessons learned.

The book does an outstanding job of what it aims to do: detail best practices. There were only a few instances where stronger contributions would have been welcome. I recognize, however, that these are difficult to satisfactorily tie together in an edited work. First, rather than address head-on several sticking point

issues of TODs, many of the authors managed to acknowledge but then skirt some of the tough issues that go hand in hand with TOD planning. For example, there are only a few sentences recommending what to do when the current zoning does not fit. This is an issue that many planners wrestle with on a daily basis. It would have been useful if other parts of the book could have referred back to some of the defining TOD benchmarks that Dittmar offers on chapter 2, explaining if and how they have been operationalized. Second, there is a more than mild advocacy tone throughout—which suggests it is written by authors who indeed “believe” in the TOD concept. This is expected and to a certain extent welcome, considering the book’s purpose and who the editors recruited as contributors. Third, and perhaps most important, the work could have been more explicit in addressing some of the especially pertinent questions that Scott Bernstein brings up in the concluding chapter. These include the following: “Do [TODs] work better for one type of developer or another? Is there a logical scale? Why [aren’t TODs] a development priority in more places? Does it only work well in upscale developments . . . what will it take to deploy it rapidly in as many places as possible?” These questions are obviously easier to raise than to answer. The fact that they are raised—but not explicitly addressed—perhaps serves to set up an additional volume to this work?

*The New Transit Town* represents a much needed addition to the TOD literature. It is up-to-date and comprehensive. It is obviously most appropriate for those interested in an applied account of TOD concepts and planning in the United States. The work is not overly scholarly in nature, nor is it intended to be. It is written at a level appropriate for a wide array of audiences including policy makers, planners, and project managers. Given its clear organization and wealth, range, and update of information, any instructor teaching a course focusing on TOD would be remiss to not use this work as a primary text. The opening chapters would even be appropriate for general planning or a specific land use/transportation/housing course in which TODs are just one component. The work provides a much needed description for students yearning for a more or less balanced view of TODs. This book brings into focus the pursuit of setting guidelines for new projects and demonstrating ways in which to incorporate them into more mainstream planning.

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