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## Transit Oriented Developments help control residents' costs

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Transit Oriented Developments – projects that mix uses of housing, office, retail, and amenities in neighborhoods within a half-mile of public transportation – are growing in Miami-Dade, and the private sector continues to show interest in them.

At the 2022 SMART Trends Transportation Summit, real estate and transportation leaders said Rapid Transit Zones, efficient permits for construction, and tax incentives are some elements they look at when building Transit Oriented Developments (TOD) and affordable housing close to them.

The Rapid Transit Zones are areas designated by the county commission as necessary for the rapid transit system, according to the county's code. As a result, any building or zoning approval is under the purview of the county, not municipalities.

County commissioners have been designating these areas parcel by parcel, and developers recognize it as an effort to speed the issuance of permits prior to construction.

"Something sitting in front of me for three years is just burning," said Executive Vice President, Business Development for the Florida East Coast Industries Jose Gonzalez

when talking about development permits. "That's not a good thing for anybody."

Amid an affordability crisis, developers said TODs help residents alleviate costs associated with transportation and, as a result, these developments become attractive for residents. These "reduce transit costs and transportation costs of its clients and its users, and it's bringing new supply to these neighborhoods," said David Martin, CEO of development firm Terra.

As for the opportunities to work with the public sector, Mr. Martin said the private sector could look at the neighborhoods around the TODs and develop mid-rise or garden-type housing that has a lower cost basis that can be put in the market at more affordable prices and is at walking distance from transit.

"We need to improve our connections to these TODs from the surrounding neighborhoods and try to look for creative ways to calibrate the zoning to provide more gentle, harmonious development around these stations, and not only at the TOD development," Mr. Martin added.

For Aaron Stolear, associate vice president of 13 Floor Investments, clear rules are needed from the

public sector on what percentage of affordable housing they want for a project. "Clear objectives and clear ground rules lead to the desired outcome," he said. "From our perspective, it really comes down to how much we can afford."

Mr. Gonzalez said waiving certain fees – such as impact fees and soft costs – for developers can attract them to develop affordable units. "The math has to work out. Most developers are doing this so they can actually take some sort of good return on their risk."

For Mr. Martin, tax increment financing [TIF] – public financing for redevelopment, infrastructure and community improvements – is another incentive to continue developing in and around TODs. "Whether it's for parking, infrastructure, resiliency, flood mitigation, or parks, or whatever those public needs are," he said, "I think a portion of those TIFs [can be] utilized as an incentive to upgrade the type of project that the county is looking for."