



## Kid-Friendly TODs

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### ISSUE

Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs)—i.e., compact, mixed-use, walking friendly neighborhoods oriented to rail or bus hubs—have gained popularity in the U.S. A commonly held view is TODs appeal to non-traditional households, like childless couples, Millennials, and empty-nesters. Such groups value good transit connections to downtown and, influenced by TV shows like *Seinfeld* and *Friends*, place a premium on living in walkable communities with outdoor cafes and shops that cater to the professional class. The Center for TOD (CTOD) estimates that 79 percent of U.S. households living in TODs by 2025 will be childless.

Can TODs be kid-friendly? This can occur by replacing surface parking with communal gardens, playgrounds, tot-lots, and open space. Shrinking parking's footprint reduces heat-island effects and water pollution from oil-stained run-off into streams. It also helps recharge groundwater, allowing



greener and healthier gardens and play areas. Such car-restricted settings are not only safer for kids to play; they are more secure because of “natural surveillance,” the ability of residents to keep any eye on who is using community spaces.

*Kid-Friendly TOD in Rieselfeld, Germany: Gardens and play areas replace surface parking.*

### FINDINGS

Case studies of TODs in Europe reveal they can indeed be kid-friendly. Some notable examples:

*GWL-Terrain, Amsterdam:* As a car-restricted project in a liberal city know for cannabis shops and its red-light district, one might assume GWL-Terrain caters to bohemians of all types. Drawn by gardens, green spaces, playgrounds, and good tram-access to Amsterdam's many cultural offerings,

GWL-Terrain is quite family-oriented: 42 percent of households have children under 18 years of age, higher than surrounding neighborhoods and well-above the 24 percent for Amsterdam as a whole. Only 20 percent of families own a car.

*Rieselfeld and Vauban Districts, Freiburg, Germany.* On the outskirts of arguably Germany’s greenest city, Freiburg, these two “eco-communities” feature ample play areas and bike-paths, narrow shared “play streets” that slow traffic, and tram spines that run through their interiors. Over 40 percent of households in both communities have children, and cycling and transit make up the majority of non-walking trips.

Age	Hammarby Sjöstad	Stockholm
0-5 years	13%	5%
6-15 years	6%	8%
16-19 years	3%	4%

*Interestingly, Hammarby Sjöstad was originally planned for empty nesters moving back to the center city from larger suburban homes. However, only 5% of the population is older than 65 (Source: AB Grontmij, 2008, Report summary: Follow up of environmental impact in Hammarby Sjöstad. Stockholm.) Instead, 22% of residents are families with children 19 years of age or younger, higher than for Stockholm as a whole (see table).*

*Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm.* With a car-free interior, plentiful green spaces and bikeways, and a central transit-boulevard, this brownfield redevelopment on the edge of Stockholm’s core has one-half the carbon emissions per capita of other neighborhoods with similar incomes. Nearly a quarter of households have school-age kids age and 13 percent have toddlers, much higher shares than for Stockholm as a whole.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

America’s TODs can become kid-friendly by reducing parking supplies in keeping with lower demands among TOD households. This also makes housing affordable, important to young families with kids. Because family-size units in higher-density development cost more to build, kid-friendly TODs can also be leveraged through programs like impact-fee offsets and tax abatements. Car-sharing and Safe-Routes-to-School programs would also draw more families to TODs.