

# The Oakland Tribune

## Oakland gets big chunk to fund transit village at MacArthur BART station

By Sean Maher

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OAKLAND — A development project aimed at revitalizing the neighborhood around the MacArthur BART station won approval for millions of dollars in state funding last week.

The MacArthur Transit Village is a development proposal to create 624 new units of housing, 20 percent of which will be set aside as affordable rental units. It also includes a 400-space parking garage and new commercial space.

State officials responsible for allocating some of the \$2.9 billion in funds from the 2006 voter-approved bond measure Proposition 1C granted the proposal \$34.3 million late last week, allowing the long-gestating project to take its first steps into the construction phase, according to Carole Galante, president of the nonprofit development group BRIDGE Housing Corporation.

"The first phase of the project is to build the parking garage," Galante said, pointing out that the residential construction would eliminate hundreds of extant parking spots outside the MacArthur BART station.

The development is projected to cost \$340 million, and the funds granted by the state last week will be used to kick-start the project with construction of the parking garage, an internal street and structural improvements to the BART plaza, Galante said.

"It will be four or five years before the first residential move-ins," she said. In the meantime, she promised no residential displacement during construction. She said some businesses along Telegraph Avenue would relocate, though, and two motels on MacArthur would be purchased from their current owners.

Galante said BRIDGE Housing Corporation will own the units set aside for affordable housing; there will be at least 90 units. Some of the remaining housing will be put on sale, and some

of the development may be owned by BART or government agencies, she said.

Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson said new housing is crucial to the future of Oakland, as the national census is predicting the city will swell in population to 550,000 people by 2035, a whopping 28 percent increase.

California Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata said when he authored Proposition 1C, "the whole concept of the bill was to find marquee projects," adding that the MacArthur proposal was the highest-ranked submission, with a perfect score from the state's Department of Housing and Community Development. In the last week, state government approved spending \$485 million in Proposition 1C funds on transit-oriented and infill housing development across the state, with Oakland nabbing \$71.5 million of that total for eight projects, according to Chris Westlake, deputy director of financial assistance for HCD.

"They had very good applications," Westlake said. "They've been successful in other housing programs as well, Oakland and Alameda County."

Citing rising gas prices and the public transportation hub of the MacArthur BART station, Perata said the development was "flipping a chapter in history" and praised the decision to fund it with state dollars.

He said if the government provides an anchor by investing first, it might help coax private investors to join the effort.

Perata said that while he shepherded legislation through the Senate to authorize spending the \$485 million, he had nothing to do with the portioning of its funds. He credited local organizers for winning over the HDC.

"Legislation is like farming," Perata said. "We made tomatoes, but the lasagna was made here."

