

# Developers put East Bay transit village on track

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Developers are pulling into the Pleasant Hill BART station with a trainload of projects.

Five developments valued at \$175 million are planned for 14 acres near the Pleasant Hill BART station.

Collectively, the office, housing, hotel and leisure projects will create Contra Costa County's first major "transit village" of development clustered around a public transportation hub.

The projects include office buildings of 195,000 square feet and 116,000 square feet, hotels by Marriott Renaissance hotel and AmeriSuites, a ClubSport fitness club and Holliday Development's 54 loft units.

In addition, BART is working with New York-based Millennium Partners as the master planner for a future mixed development on another 11 acres where surface

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## HOLLIDAY: Office, hotel, housing developers ride the rails into Contra Costa County

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parking is currently located.

Jim Kennedy, redevelopment director for Contra Costa County, said the developers had come up with their projects independently and were not working together to create a transit village, but said each of the proposals help fulfill a county goal of building 2,200 housing units and 2.5 million square feet of commercial development within one quarter of a mile of the BART station.

So far, 1,000 units and 1.5 million square feet of space have been constructed, he said.

"We are trying to create an area of higher intensity uses that will facilitate people getting to and from the area using modes other than single-occupancy vehicles," Kennedy said. "In absence of that, a sprawl mode of development is the only option the Bay Area will have."

### Projects take shape

Thomas Properties and Metropolitan Life unit SSR Realty Advisors are developing a \$40 million, 195,000 square foot office building at the northwest corner of Wayne Drive and Oak Road. The seven-story building will feature 15,000 square feet of ground level retail.

Thomas bought the 2.5-acre site two years ago. He said he selected the site because of "great BART and freeway access and a great mix of housing and office buildings." Thomas has since sold the land to SSR but will still assist in the development.

Spieker Properties Inc. is following on the heels of Thomas.

The Menlo Park-based company pur-



Holliday (left), Wakelin: "Challenge (is) to develop a suburban site with urban know-how."

NAIB JOE HARKIN

chased a 2.5-acre site on May 10 from Homestead Village Inc., a hotel developer.

Spieker plans a 116,000 square foot, midrise office tower, said Frank Garcia, a vice president in Spieker's Walnut Creek office. The new building would be located at 3055 Oak Road. Ground breaking is projected for spring 2001.

"Based on the way Treat Towers was received, we feel the project will be very successful," said Garcia, referring to Spieker's 363,000-square-foot Walnut Creek buildings that were completed earlier this year and are fully leased. Demand from the new building will come from those priced out of the Peninsula and San Francisco who can take BART to work,

he said.

Spieker's building is unlikely to compete with Thomas', Garcia said.

"I would imagine when ours comes to market, his will be completely leased," he said.

### Live/work breakthrough

County officials are hoping that those working in the new building live close by. To that end, they hosted a competitive bid for loft projects.

Holliday Developments won the bid and purchased the 2.5-acre development site near Las Juntas Way and Coggins Drive this month from the county. The compa-

ny will construct the first live/work units in Contra Costa County, according to Holliday partner Peter Palmisano.

"For the first time we are seeing lofts in Contra Costa county and near BART. Our theme will be live, work and ride."

Kevin Wakelin, also a partner at Holliday Development, said the site was a "prime location" for residential development.

"It posed an interesting challenge to develop a suburban site with our urban know-how," Wakelin said.

Holliday Developments, headed by Rick Holliday, is best known for its warehouse to loft conversions in Emeryville.

The \$14 million for-sale "Iron Horse Lofts" near the Pleasant Hill BART will be launched in July. The project is named for a nearby trail.

San Francisco firms David Baker Associates designed the townhouses, which will be three stories with vaulted ceilings. Cannon Construction is the general contractor.

Holliday's lofts will be adjacent to 87 affordable town homes being developed by Bridge Housing Corp.

Pleasanton-based Leisure Sports Inc. plans a 175-room Marriott Renaissance hotel attached to a 65,000-square-foot, high-end ClubSport health club.

The \$38 million project will break ground in August and is scheduled to open in January 2002. Once the 14 acres of land in the county's jurisdiction are developed, county officials will turn their attention to the 11 acres of BART land.

The next step will be a set of public forums where residents can express their ideas for the BART property, Kennedy said. ■