

INVESTING IN NEIGHBORHOOD RECREATION

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REDEVELOPING OAKLAND

REASSESS / REEVALUATE / REBUILD / REVITALIZE

INVESTING IN NEIGHBORHOOD RECREATION Parks, pool, ice center get boost

Hot town, summer in the city. It's a great time to get out and enjoy Oakland's many parks, pools and other recreational amenities. You may have noticed some recent improvements in your neighborhood, but you may not have realized the critical role redevelopment funds are making in creating new recreation spaces and fixing up older ones.

CENTRAL DISTRICT: OAKLAND ICE CENTER AND FOX SQUARE

There was a time when it seemed like building one of the country's only urban ice rinks in Downtown Oakland may have been a bad idea. Not any longer.

Since San Jose Arena Management took over the Oakland Ice Center in fall 2007, it has been operating in the black for the first time in more than a decade. And thousands of local children have strapped on skates and hit the ice through the outreach efforts of the operator, an affiliate of the San Jose Sharks hockey team.

"For almost all of them, it's the first time. It's such a confidence builder to do something you've never done before," says general manager Melissa Fitzgerald.

The center, which has two ice rinks and hosts activities from open skating and hockey to lessons and skate-less broom ball, is required by the City to offer free admission to 1,000 Oakland youth a year. In its first year, it admitted nearly 3,000 children for free.

(continued on page 2)



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▲ A TILE MOSAIC WELCOMES SWIMMERS TO THE RENOVATED FREMONT POOL.

▶ FOX SQUARE IN UPTOWN IS DOWNTOWN'S NEWEST PARK.





INVESTING IN NEIGHBORHOOD RECREATION *(continued from page 1)*

In addition, Oakland Technical High School started a before-school skating class for physical education credits, as well as an ice hockey team. The gym class put on its own on-ice production of Michael Jackson's "Thriller." Several other schools use the rink for P.E., and children from the non-profit Harbor House skate weekly. Free

skating is available to any Oakland school by reservation, and discounts are available for other groups.

The ice center, on 18th Street near Telegraph Avenue, also is open daily for public skating and is operating summer camps.

The City, which took over ownership of the ice center soon after it opened in the mid-1990s and its developer defaulted on an \$11 million loan, is finally seeing the payoff of its investment.

More recently, prior to Sharks Ice taking over, redevelopment invested \$300,000 in capital improvements and deferred maintenance. The City does not pay Sharks Ice to manage the center but, instead, the operator keeps a portion of the profits.

"It has been a blast for us to see kids get out there and take risks and feel a sense of success," says Fitzgerald. "With the location of the rink, the commitment the City has made and the resources our company brings to the table with its affiliation with the Sharks, it really is doing what a municipally owned facility should do in an area that really needs it." For more information, visit www.oaklandice.com.

Not far from the ice center, Downtown Oakland's newest park, Fox Square, recently opened at 19th and Rashida Muhammed streets in the new Uptown housing development.

The \$1.6 million, 25,000-square-foot public park, which includes grassy areas, trees, planters and seating, will also be home to the "Remember Them" monument. *(See arts story on page 6.)* Uptown developer Forest City created the park, which is owned by the City, and will be responsible for maintaining it for 66 years.



WEST OAKLAND: RAIMONDI AND DEFREMERY PARKS

It may seem like an unlikely spot for a park, nestled between the MacArthur Maze and industrial lots full of trucks.

But Raimondi Park, at 18th and Wood streets, is reputed to have some of the best playing fields in town. It's also a crucial patch of green for this West Oakland neighborhood, including the new Central Station housing development surrounding the historic 16th Street train station.

Redevelopment funds covered nearly \$1.6 million of the \$5.46 million cost to install a new baseball diamond, synthetic turf multipurpose field, lighting, landscaping, bleachers, benches, picnic tables and a tot lot. Improvements were completed last fall.

"It's fantastic. It's one of the best fields in Oakland, which Oakland sorely needs," said resident Gavin Keith as he took the field with his girls' soccer team for practice on a recent afternoon.

Also slated for improvements are the tennis courts and DeFremery House in West Oakland's DeFremery Park. The Redevelopment Division plans to spend \$85,000 to repair and resurface the tennis courts and rehabilitate the historic house – the site of a recreation center – including painting, replacing the roof and repairing decks and dry rot.

BROADWAY/ MACARTHUR/SAN PABLO: MOSSWOOD PARK DOG RUN

A corner of North Oakland's Mosswood Park that had been overrun by drug dealers has gone to the dogs. And it's a big improvement.

Seth Katz, a neighborhood resident since 1999, hatched the idea for a dog run after learning that it could be instrumental in driving drug dealers and users from the under-utilized 11-acre park at Broadway and West MacArthur Boulevard. Not incidentally, he had also acquired a high-energy puppy.

In 2006, Katz successfully applied for a \$40,000 Neighborhood Project Initiative program grant for the Broadway/MacArthur/San Pablo redevelopment area to create separate small and large dog play areas. *(See Neighborhood Project Initiative sidebar on page 4.)* Last year, he secured another \$15,000 grant for water fountains.

(continued on page 3)

TOP: Under new management, the Oakland Ice Center is attracting plenty of skaters.

ABOVE: Seth Ketz poses with his dog at the Mosswood Park dog run he helped create.

LEFT: Fans gather to watch a soccer game at the new Raimondi Park.

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INVESTING IN NEIGHBORHOOD RECREATION

(continued from page 2)

“There is dramatically less drug dealing in Mosswood Park since the dog run was built. Far less drug litter, which used to appear in the form of 1-inch Ziplock bags and used needles,” Katz says. “We tore down a dangerous, burned wreck of a building, too, so the area is physically safer in a number of ways, and we have reclaimed unused or underutilized space in the park.”

“The dog run can’t take credit for all the improvements,” Katz adds, but “today I get enthusiastic thanks not just from dog owners but also lots of people who don’t own dogs.”



▲ Swimmers enjoy the newly renovated Fremont Pool, the City’s busiest.

CENTRAL CITY EAST: FREMONT POOL

Harith Aleem grew up swimming at Fremont Pool. He advanced from the swim team to become a life guard before becoming a swim instructor and coach.

Today, he is the aquatics supervisor for the City of Oakland. So it’s with no small amount of pride that he watched his childhood pool reopen June 15 after an \$800,000 makeover paid for with Central City East redevelopment funds.

In addition to a new façade and entryway, the pool – on Foothill Boulevard across from Fremont High School – now has a new deck, benches, picnic tables, shade structure, trees and a new lawn.

(continued on page 4)

“WE TRY TO MENTOR ... (NEIGHBORHOOD CHILDREN), AND WHEN THEY BECOME OF AGE, WE CAN HIRE THEM. THAT’S THE PROCESS I WENT THROUGH.”

— HARITH ALEEM

Neighborhood Project Initiative Lets YOU Propose Changes

Would you like to see an improvement to your neighborhood but don’t have the money or know where to start?

The Neighborhood Project Initiative (NPI) program can help. The annual grant program funds small, one-time projects initiated by community members to beautify neighborhoods and reduce blight. Up to \$80,000 in redevelopment funds are available in some areas for projects ranging from street landscaping to murals to park improvements proposed by residents, businesses, community groups and other organizations.

North Oakland homeowner Gwelen Paliaga, who has lived in the Broadway/MacArthur/San Pablo redevelopment area for eight years, submitted a successful proposal for a \$75,000 grant for landscaping the median of West MacArthur Boulevard with trees and plants between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Webster Street.

“Permanent landscaping, particularly trees, is a long-term improvement for the wide streets we have,” says Paliaga, who had been involved in a previous NPI grant for median landscaping nearby.

“When I look around me and the neighborhood I live in, I see opportunities for improvement,” says Paliaga, who submitted his application in conjunction with the Greater Mosswood Neighborhood Association. “It wasn’t much work. Staff did the work. All I had to do was fill out the application.”

In the Coliseum redevelopment area, residents were awarded two NPI grants totaling \$40,000 to redesign Tyrone Carney Park, which the City closed in 2002 due to drug dealing and violence. The grants allowed the Sobrante Park neighborhood community to hire well-known landscape architect Walter Hood to design the park and surrounding streetscape, in conjunction with the City and the Alameda County public health department. More than 150 residents provided input.

“Working with Walter Hood was a wonderful experience,” says Lasonia Williams, president of the Sobrante Park Home Improvement Association. “His knowledge, process and communication style helped us to expand our vision of the space and what it could become.”

Both the City and community are currently seeking funding to make the community’s dream park a reality.

“We look forward to seeing the project through to fruition,” says Williams. “It will greatly improve our perception and the perception of others as they enter our beautiful community. We expect a change in dynamics that will enhance the benefits

of living in the Sobrante Park neighborhood.”

The Neighborhood Project Initiative program is currently available in the following redevelopment areas: Broadway/MacArthur/San Pablo, West Oakland, Central City East and Coliseum. For more information on the program and how to apply, visit www.business2oakland.com/redevelopment.



INVESTING IN NEIGHBORHOOD RECREATION

(continued from page 3)

“It’s one of the best things happening in that immediate area for the community as a whole,” says Aleem, pointing out that the pool is one of the few neighborhood resources with something for all members of a family, from children’s lessons and drop-in swimming to water aerobics. “We try to mentor and mold (neighborhood children), and when they become of age, we can hire them. That’s the process I went through.”

Already the City’s busiest pool, the renovation is expected to make Fremont Pool even more popular.

“It’s like taking it up a notch. It shows the community that the City values it,” Aleem says. “I’m excited to have my son swim there.”

COLISEUM: EAST OAKLAND COMMUNITY LIBRARY, LION CREEK PARK, EAST OAKLAND SPORTS COMPLEX AND TEEN CENTER

Excitement is building as well in the Coliseum redevelopment area, where the new East Oakland Community Library is scheduled to open on 81st Avenue this winter.

Redevelopment funds of \$4 million provided the City’s required match to secure \$6.5 million in state funding. Additional fundraising is ongoing.

The library – which will include Spanish-language materials, a community meeting room and a computer lab – will also be shared by two neighboring public schools, ACORN Woodland Elementary and EnCompass Academy, and used by 11 others. Because other branch libraries in the area are small, the new library will be able to offer a range of services for children, teens and adults, including literacy classes and workforce assistance.

“We look at the schools there and this new library as a transformation for the entire neighborhood,” says Associate Library Director Gerry Garzon. He says the library is working particularly hard to create an area that is welcoming for teens.

The Redevelopment Agency also contributed \$500,000 to construct a public park in the newly constructed, mixed-income Lion Creek Crossings housing development. The park includes basketball facilities and play structures and will encompass a restored portion of Lion Creek.

Meanwhile, plans are in the works for a major new sports facility, the East Oakland Sports Complex at Ira Jenkins Park, which includes swimming pools, a gymnasium with basketball courts, a running track and playing fields. The Redevelopment Agency has allocated \$2 million to partially fund Phase 1 of the project, which includes an indoor pool and water slide, and exercise and multi-purpose rooms. The project is scheduled to open in winter of 2011.

Another plan for local teens is also in the works with \$800,000 in redevelopment funds being used to purchase a building next to the Rainbow Recreation Center on International Boulevard to create a teen center. Another \$80,000 for improvements was awarded from the Neighborhood Project Initiative program.

For more information on summer activities, check out Oakland Parks and Recreation listings at www.oaklandnet.com/parks/inside_oakland/brochure.asp.



ABOVE: Artists renderings show the East Oakland Sports Complex, scheduled to open in 2011, which will include a gymnasium, playing fields and pools.

BELOW: A picnic area and play structure at Lion Creek Crossing housing development welcomes nearby tenants to relax and play.



MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR

GREGORY HUNTER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

Summer in the city is a great time to slow down, look around and enjoy what Oakland has to offer. Maybe the kids are off from school and you're looking for a way to cool off. How about a dip at the newly renovated Fremont Pool or a spin around the ice at the Oakland Ice Center? Or perhaps you're taking some vacation time and would enjoy a leisurely meal at one of Oakland's newest restaurants, an iced coffee at a new neighborhood coffee shop or perusing the wares at Fruitvale's latest shopping spot, La Plaza del Sol?

What all these summer options have in common is that they were made possible in part by redevelopment funding. The tax-increment revenues from the City's redevelopment areas are being funneled right back into the neighborhoods where they were generated.

Those funds are helping rebuild communities, being used to attract new businesses and create jobs, spruce up existing storefronts, improve recreation and cultural opportunities from pools to playing fields to libraries, and make neighborhood-initiated priorities a reality.

In this issue of *Redeveloping Oakland*, we highlight programs and successes that are making a difference in your neighborhood, including redevelopment-funded recreation improvements, façade and tenant improvement grants, graffiti-busting murals, the Neighborhood Project Initiative program, Oakland's burgeoning dining and arts scenes, and more.

OAKLAND BUSINESS ASSISTANCE CENTER

As the Redevelopment Division works to help improve businesses that, in turn, improve neighborhoods, we're also happy to partner with other City departments and non-profits in the creation of the Oakland Business Assistance Center (OBAC), a priority of Mayor Ron Dellums and his Small Business Task Force.

Scheduled to open July 1, OBAC will be a centralized clearinghouse for business support services with staff to help owners starting, relocating or growing a business in Oakland. From license and permit requirements to the City's zoning code, staff will be available to assist business owners through face-to-face interactions, information and referrals.

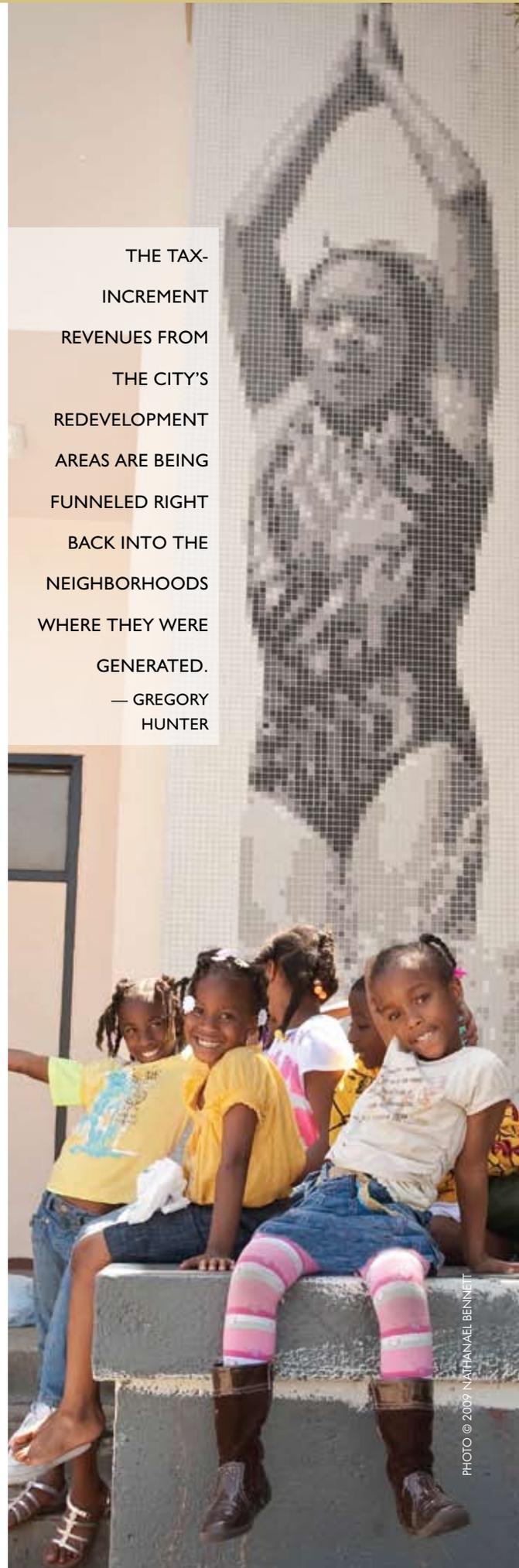
Anyone needing City assistance with a business is invited to stop by the new "one-stop" center at 270 Frank Ogawa Plaza or visit its new, interactive Web site at www.oaklandbac.com.

We hope you enjoy all Oakland has to offer this summer.



Gregory D. Hunter

THE TAX-
INCREMENT
REVENUES FROM
THE CITY'S
REDEVELOPMENT
AREAS ARE BEING
FUNNELED RIGHT
BACK INTO THE
NEIGHBORHOODS
WHERE THEY WERE
GENERATED.
— GREGORY
HUNTER





ARTS BLOOM IN OAKLAND



ALL PHOTOS © 2009 NATHANAEEL BENNETT

Like wildflowers, art projects are popping up throughout Downtown Oakland and beyond, adding bursts of color to the urban landscape.

Hard to miss at the corner of Broadway and 11th Street is a bold arrow with the words “To All Trains.” But the arrow directs the viewer to more than the nearby BART station. It’s Oakland artist Rocky Rische-Baird’s invitation to step back in time with his mural of patrons boarding a historic Key Route streetcar.

The mural, completed last summer, adorns the site of the former Key System headquarters, a historic building slated to be restored and incorporated into a 20-story office building by SKS Investments, LLC, of San Francisco.

“I think the Key System resonates with people as a symbol of healthy community and sensible infrastructure,” says Rische-Baird. “It was such forward thinking.”

SKS Vice President Steve Wolmark says the developer wanted to “engage the site” before construction starts. “It’s such a prominent corner in Oakland,” he adds.

SKS partnered with other businesses and the Oakland Heritage Alliance (OHA) to commission the \$10,000 mural, which will eventually be dismantled. A part will likely be used in the building’s lobby and the rest auctioned to raise money for OHA.

“We’re relatively new to Downtown Oakland, but we’ve worked very hard to be good neighbors,” Wolmark says. “We’re big, big believers in Downtown Oakland.”

Downtown will also be home to a major new sculpture in Fox Square in the Uptown development.

(continued on page 7)

ABOVE: Passengers board a historic Key Route streetcar in a mural at 11th Street and Broadway in Downtown.

RIGHT: A giant sea turtle swims gracefully in the new mural “Emergent Sea,” in contrast to the traffic speeding by on Interstate 880.



ARTS BLOOM IN OAKLAND *(continued from page 6)*

Oakland artist Mario Chiodo plans to create a 25-foot-high bronze sculpture, titled “Remember Them,” which will depict 25 extraordinary humanitarians, living and deceased, from Dr. Martin Luther King to Harvey Milk to Rigoberta Menchu.

“This monument represents an international cross-section of visionaries throughout several centuries who have inspired and aided others through their passionate beliefs in human rights and peace,” Chiodo says.

The \$7 million project – which also includes an educational curriculum for youth, currently being introduced in Oakland high schools – will be privately funded through donations made to the non-profit Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce Foundation, with an initial lead gift from Kaiser Permanente, and donated to the City of Oakland. Fundraising has reached the halfway mark.

For more information or to donate to the project, e-mail jharaburda@oaklandchamber.com or visit www.remember-them.org.

But new art and beautification projects aren’t limited to Downtown. Redevelopment funds are contributing to such efforts throughout Oakland’s neighborhoods.

The new façade at the Fremont Pool includes a handmade ceramic tile entryway, and the East Oakland Community Library includes etched-glass clerestory windows by artist Rene Yung that symbolize neighborhood regeneration and reference neighborhood history. That history and neighborhood stories also are being captured in a digital archive of filmed vignettes through “Our Oakland: Eastside Stories,” which can be viewed online oaklandspeaks.weebly.com/stories.html and at a video kiosk at the new library. These projects are a collaboration with the Oakland’s Public Art Program.

One project already making a splash is a large mural of a serene sea turtle swimming in a vibrant blue sea on Interstate 880 near 23rd Avenue (see page 6). Completed this spring, “Emergent Sea” is not only catching the eye of motorists on the busy freeway but helping prevent graffiti and illegal dumping, both through the mural itself and a new security camera.

It’s one of three murals commissioned for \$75,000 through the Coliseum redevelopment area’s Tough on Blight program.

“It’s so highly visible from the freeway, and a lot of what people see of Oakland is from Interstate 880,” says Daniel Seamans, an urban economic analyst with the Redevelopment Agency. “It does have an impact to beautify that area as much as possible.”

Artists Dan Fontes and Caroline Stern also worked with a group of young, underserved girls through Girls Incorporated of Alameda County, teaching them about murals and other aspects of art. The girls created their own works, hosted an art show and created pieces to donate to Congresswoman Barbara Lee.

“I feel really, really great, like I never thought I would do something so outstanding,” wrote one 15-year-old participant of her work.

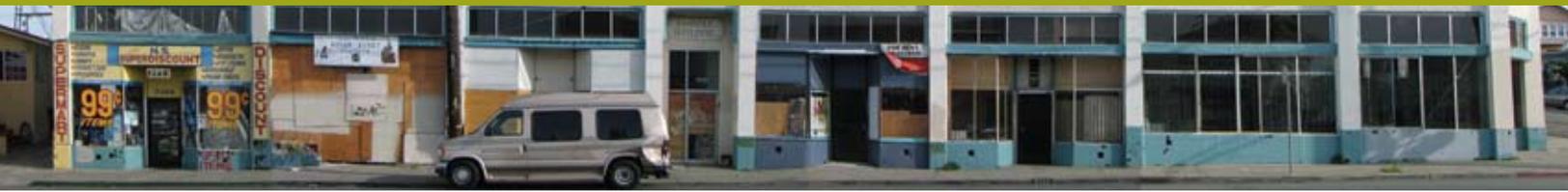
“A LOT OF WHAT PEOPLE SEE OF OAKLAND IS FROM INTERSTATE 880. IT DOES HAVE AN IMPACT TO BEAUTIFY THAT AREA.”

— DANIEL SEAMANS



Oakland sculptor Mario Chiodo works on “Remember Them” (below), a bronze sculpture featuring 25 of the world’s most important humanitarians, which will be placed in Fox Square.





OPENING NEW BUSINESSES & FIXING UP EXISTING OLD ONES

Facade and tenant improvement grants are hassle-free

Business and property owners throughout Oakland are sprucing up storefronts and opening new businesses with the help of the Redevelopment Agency's Commercial Property Façade and Tenant Improvement programs.

Grants are available in key commercial corridors in participating redevelopment areas for tenants and property owners looking to paint, replace windows and doors or add new signs, awnings, lighting or landscaping. Grant amounts are based on linear feet measurements and typically cover 50 percent of the total cost of eligible exterior improvements. In areas that are both redevelopment and designated Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization (NCR) target areas, grants can cover as much as two-thirds of the total project cost.

Tenant improvement grants of up to \$45,000 can be obtained in select areas for interior commercial spaces that have been vacant for six months or more, with the goal of bringing retail businesses and services into locations that are difficult or costly to renovate. Funds can be used for demolition and reconstruction,

systems work such as plumbing and electrical, interior design, hazardous materials abatement and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

For both programs, the Redevelopment Agency will match an owner's or tenant's investment up to the cap and reimburse expenses. Free, limited architectural design services also are available. (Maximum grant amounts in the Central District are \$50,000 for façade, with another \$25,000 available for historic restorations in historic districts, and \$99,000 for tenant improvements.)

Many property owners and tenants who have participated admit they were surprised by just how easy and hassle-free the process was, and they laud Redevelopment staff for their hands-on assistance.

Here, we highlight recent projects that have reduced blight and brought retail, services and jobs into neighborhoods throughout Oakland. For more information on façade and tenant improvement grants, visit www.business2oakland.com/redevelopment.

▲ **ABOVE:**
The Fairfax Building on Fairfax Avenue was a longtime blight on the neighborhood, with portions boarded up following a car accident.

▶ **RIGHT:**
Refurbished façades invite new businesses to the area.



◀ **BEFORE**

BROADWAY/MACARTHUR/SAN PABLO

The old Pacific Bait and Tackle Store in the Golden Gate District had been vacant and dilapidated for years.

After Michael Meniktas and his partners bought the building at 6334 San Pablo Ave., and the adjacent property, in 2004, they sought façade improvement grants for both and received \$55,000 in redevelopment funds for their \$150,000 project. They've painted the prominent storefront at the corner of San Pablo and Alcatraz avenues in hues of beige with green and terra cotta trim and added new lighting.

"The process was fairly simple. There aren't a lot of forms," Meniktas says.

The owners heard from plenty of concerned neighbors and discouraged tenants interested in opening liquor or cigarette shops. Now, the spot is poised to open as a coffeehouse run by a neighborhood resident.

"It's an emerging area," says Meniktas, who has been pleased to see other nearby buildings being renovated. "The neighborhood could return to its former glory."

The project is among the recipients of \$126,000 in façade and \$44,000 in tenant improvement grants that have leveraged \$473,000 in private investment in this redevelopment area in fiscal years 2007-09.

(continued on page 9)



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OPENING AND REFURBISHING BUSINESSES *(continued from page 8)*

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Old Oakland, in recent years, has become one of the City's hottest neighborhoods, with new restaurants, clubs and shops opening.

What better place to open what co-owner Gloria Fangon-Hitz calls a "cool, hip" residential and commercial real estate brokerage and consulting firm?

In January, Fangon-Hitz and partner Matt Gorman opened UrbanSpace at 811 Washington Street. A façade grant of \$18,000 and tenant improvement grant of \$17,000 aided the partners in their beautiful \$100,000 transformation of a former discount store.

"I love the community. The merchants and people who live around here are great," says Fangon-Hitz. "It's a very vibrant, active community."

Starting in October, the offices – which feature a chic décor of exposed brick, wood floors and paper-lantern lighting – will begin double-duty as an art gallery, showcasing museum-quality pieces.

On the next block, the two-story Victorian at 727 Washington Street also has undergone a facelift to replicate the original 1880s storefront, thanks to a \$50,000 façade grant that covered a third of the cost of the project, which included custom windows. One of the last buildings on Washington Street needing rehabilitation, the corner property now sports a pale yellow façade with sage green and gold detail work.

Redevelopment staff is currently working with the owner to find a tenant for the building, as well as two neighboring properties, which have been vacant for years.

The two Washington Street projects were among 76 façade projects granted nearly \$1.6 million and 50 tenant improvement projects given nearly \$1.9 million in grants in fiscal years 2007-09, leveraging nearly \$20 million in private investment in the Central District.

Old Oakland



STARTING IN OCTOBER, THE URBANSPEACE OFFICES (PICTURED AT LEFT AND BELOW) – WHICH FEATURE A CHIC DÉCOR OF EXPOSED BRICK, WOOD FLOORS AND PAPER-LANTERN LIGHTING – WILL BEGIN DOUBLE-DUTY AS AN ART GALLERY, SHOWCASING MUSEUM-QUALITY PIECES.

LANK LLOYD WRIGHT
ARCHITECT

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
February 29 – May 12, 1959



WEST OAKLAND

When Oakland resident Kubron "Sam" Sultan bought the vacant building at 3261 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., he decided it made sense to open a daycare center, which had been the building's previous use.

"There are a lot of kids in this neighborhood that need daycare," says Sultan, whose tenant plans to open this summer.

He was awarded both façade and tenant improvement grants and so far has received \$32,000 for interior improvements.

"I was always reluctant to work with the City. I thought it would be a lot of paperwork," Sultan says. "The City was really helpful and easy to work with. This experience opened my eyes, and I look forward to working with the City in the future and being involved with giving back to my community."

In the West Oakland redevelopment area, \$34,000 in façade and \$306,000 in tenant improvement grants were given in the last fiscal year, leveraging more than \$1 million in private investment.

(continued on page 10)

OPENING AND REFURBISHING BUSINESSES *(continued from page 9)*



▲ **AFTER:**

Façade and tenant improvement grants helped transform the Helping Hands Community Center, which now houses a technology center.

► **BEFORE**



CENTRAL CITY EAST

Across from the Eastmont Town Center, children and senior citizens are gaining crucial computer skills through the work of OCCUR's Eastmont Technology Center.

The center recently moved to the Helping Hands Community Center at 6948 Foothill Blvd., thanks to a \$60,000 façade and \$45,000 tenant improvement grant to help complete the \$180,000 project.

"We could not have gotten this project done without the City. We were able to complete something that would have taken us years to do on our own," says Donna Hayes, a church elder at Wings of Love Maranatha Ministries, which owns the property.

The project converted a former post office into a lighter, brighter, more useful space with new windows, lighting, landscaping, paint and extensive interior renovations.

"We wanted to make it into a facility that was not only attractive but useful," says Hayes. The technology center "was a perfect match."

COLISEUM

The site of a shuttered 99-cents store in the Fruitvale district is coming back to life as a 7,000-square-foot neighborhood shopping center that will offer services and wares from haircuts to Mexican candy to bridal gowns.

La Plaza del Sol at International Boulevard and 41st Avenue, benefited from \$20,000 in façade improvement grants and \$45,000 in tenant improvement grants toward the project's \$190,000 costs.

Owner Mario Juarez, a Fruitvale native who still lives in the neighborhood says, "We had the City with us every step of the way and now, we'll get 20 brand new businesses."



Coliseum Redevelopment Area, Plaza del Sol

The Fairfax Building (*photo on page 8*), at the corner of Foothill Boulevard and Fairfax Avenue, also has undergone a major façade improvement with new windows, doors, tile work and paint. Redevelopment funds covered \$60,000 in façade grants as well as an additional \$5,000 grant for historic properties to offset the \$101,000 project cost.

The building, part of which had been boarded up after a car rammed into it, had long been a blight on a critical corner. Now, it features eye-catching storefronts in shades of blue, green, mustard and terra cotta. Much of the ground-floor space will be used for retail tenants and the upper floors converted to office space.

These two projects were among 10 in Central City East that received \$212,500 in facade grants and \$165,000 in tenant improvement grants in fiscal years 2007-09, leveraging \$1.5 million in private investment.

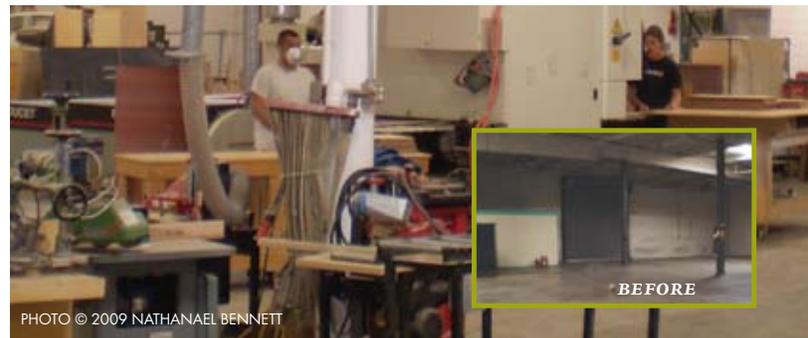


PHOTO © 2009 NATHANAEI BENNETT

AFTER: *Workers build custom cabinetry at Detail A Studios, a previously vacant building.*

Another new business, Detail A Studios, took advantage of the Tenant Improvement Program to move its 20-employee cabinetry and mill working business from San Francisco to 730 105th Avenue.

The City paid \$45,000 in tenant improvement grants, of the \$225,000 project cost, making the move possible.

"It was wonderful," says co-owner Mark Brown. "Everyone was nice and friendly and did their job. They made lots of helpful suggestions and stayed with us throughout the project."

Façade grants of \$126,000 and tenant improvement grants of \$225,500 were awarded in the Coliseum Redevelopment Area in fiscal year 2008-09, leveraging private investment of nearly \$700,000.

OAKLAND RESTAURANT SCENE IS 'ON FIRE'

When it comes to fine dining, is Oakland poised to become the next New York?

San Francisco Chronicle restaurant critic Michael Bauer recently mused that it's easier to find a great, new restaurant in Oakland than in the Big Apple.

Bauer, who granted six slots to Oakland eateries in his annual Top 100 restaurants round-up, says the City "is on fire." Oakland "has come into its own as a dining destination," he writes.

From Uptown to Jack London Square to the City's many diverse neighborhoods, new restaurants are creating a buzz, serving up everything from upscale sushi to down-home soul food.

The Uptown area, near the newly reopened Fox Oakland Theater, has seen a burst of activity with the openings of Flora, Pican (below), Mua, Franklin Square Wine Bar, Café Madrid and Ozumo, which received \$110,000 in façade and tenant improvement grants from the Redevelopment Agency to help it open.

In Jack London Square and nearby, Cocina Poblano and Miss Pearl's Jam House have opened in the past 18 months. They'll be joined later this year by Daniel Patterson's Bracina, as well as the new 170,000-square-foot Jack London Market with bistros, fine dining and a public market. For more information on downtown restaurants, visit www.meetdowntownoak.com.

But the bustling dining scene doesn't stop downtown. New restaurants are popping up

in neighborhoods throughout Oakland, many of them with the help and investment of the Oakland Redevelopment Agency.

In West Oakland, chef, author and neighborhood resident Tanya Holland opened Brown Sugar Kitchen – which serves up soul food with African and Caribbean influences made with local, organic ingredients – with the help of a tenant improvement grant. Brown Sugar Kitchen was recently named best new restaurant by the readers of *Oakland Magazine* and featured in *Gourmet* magazine.

In the Central City East redevelopment area, Souls Restaurant, which also received a tenant improvement grant, is dishing up Southern cooking in an elegant atmosphere on Foothill Boulevard.

(continued on back)



*Tanya Holland,
Restaurant Owner,
Chef and cookbook Author*



Souls Restaurant in the Central City East Redevelopment Area.



Luis Abundés, owner, Cinco de Mayo Ice Cream Shop in Coliseum Redevelopment Area.

OAKLAND RESTAURANT SCENE IS 'ON FIRE' *(continued from page 11)*

Already a culinary mecca for delicious, authentic Mexican, Central American and Asian cuisine, Coliseum's Fruitvale neighborhood has added an abundance of new eateries. Cinco de Mayo Helados, La Verbena Café, Taco Grill & Pozoleria, Churros Mexicana, the Mi Pueblo Market Food Court, Panadería El Sol, Taqueria Mar y Tierra, Taqueria Reinoso, La Original Tamería y Taqueria, Lee's Garden Chinese Restaurant, Don Ya Japanese Restaurant and China Joe Fast Food all have opened.

Farther east, San Miguel Restaurant and Bakery have opened. Wingtime and Good to the Bone, which both received façade and tenant improvement grants, are opening.

Celestine's (right), which offers dining and entertainment on Edes Avenue in the Coliseum area, received \$75,000 in façade and tenant improvement grants.

Take advantage of the long summer days and check out one of your new neighborhood joints or head downtown for a wealth of dining options.



Celestine's Fine Dining in Coliseum Redevelopment Area

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

In the last issue of *Redeveloping Oakland*, we asked for your feedback on our first year of quarterly newsletters that highlight redevelopment projects, programs and initiatives.

We're happy to report that you like what you've seen so far. Readers have given us high marks for quality and most would recommend the newsletter to a friend.

But we'd like to hear from more readers in our continuing efforts to improve *Redeveloping Oakland* and, with it, improve the public's understanding of the positive change redevelopment is helping make in Oakland's neighborhoods.

To take a brief survey, please visit www.business2oakland.com/newslettersurvey.

Past issues of *Redeveloping Oakland* at www.business2oakland.com/redevelopment.

Thank you for your participation.



www.business2oakland.com/newslettersurvey



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