



MEDIA RELEASE

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COUNCILPERSON DESLEY BROOKS & THE YMCA/URBAN SERVICES TEEN CENTER TEAM UP TO IMPROVE DISTRICT 6

*City of Oakland's Façade Improvement Program Helps "Y" Pay
For Commercial Property Makeover*

(Oakland, CA - January 16, 2006) - Things are looking a lot nicer at the corner of Seminary Avenue and Foothill Boulevard, where the YMCA/Urban Services Teen Center is located. The Center is in the final stages of completing a major renovation to the exterior of their building. This renovation is one part of Councilperson Desley Brooks' overall vision for revitalizing this commercial corridor.

About a year ago Councilperson Brooks asked the Community and Economic Development Agency (CEDA) of the City of Oakland to hire an architect to create a rendering of what the storefronts on the commercial corridor could look like if they made renovations to their buildings. With a couple of the renderings in hand, Councilperson Brooks approached the Executive Director of the YMCAs of the Eastbay, Robert Wilkins, about implementing the plan. He agreed, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization Program of CEDA has a Façade Improvement Program which assists property owners in upgrading their property. The Program will hire an architect to work with an owner to develop a plan. Once the plan is developed, the Program will match up to \$10,000 to implement the Plan.

Chris Chapman, the Center's Executive Director, is extremely pleased with the changes to the building. "We are training our young people to be leaders in this community;

we've worked with them on eliminating blight, what better lesson could we teach them than to be self reflective to see where changes could be made at home." Chapman went on to say "you can feel the energy of change taking place in this neighborhood; I'm proud we could be a part of it." Councilperson Brooks is also pleased with the changes. "Its amazing what a difference these simple changes have made, I've attempted to implement an approach to economic development that says lets build on and grow capacity in our existing businesses while we seek to entice additional businesses to come into the area.

Brooks indicated that the recent façade improvements have attracted other investments in the area with the recent purchase of two parcels on the commercial corridor.

Participating in the Façade Improvement Program has already been a benefit to the Teen Center. The new open air veneer is welcoming to all who pass through the community.

One teen stopped by the center to inquire about its services. He stated that the "new look" of the building attracted him to find out what was going on inside. "I had always realized that the "Y" was over there while walking home from school, but it now looks much better and seems like a nice place to be."

The YMCA Urban Services and Teen Center, a membership organization, primarily serves teenagers from the immediate area grades 7th – 12th. Membership dues are the YMCA's lifeline to continue its mission to provide programs that build strong kids, strong families and strong communities. The center is open Monday through Friday from 2pm - 6pm and offers career-oriented programs such as culinary arts, cosmetology and personal computer training to over 150 students a week.

The Center is seeking donations to help purchase new furniture and computers to go along with their new façade.

To learn more about the YMCA's Urban Services and Teen Center, call 510.638.3984 or visit www.ymcaeastbay.org. To contact Councilperson Brooks, call 510.238.7006 or email her at dbrooks@oaklandnet.com

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