

New commuter rail stations will fit neighborhoods to a T Fairmount Line upgrades bring redevelopment to Dorchester, Mattapan route



(Jonathan Wiggs / Globe Staff Photo) The site near the former Cote Ford dealership in Mattapan is near the planned expansion of the Fairmount commuter rail line.

By [Robert Preer](#)

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In the midst of a prolonged real estate slowdown, an old industrial building at Four Corners, a closed garage on Talbot Avenue, and a long-vacant car dealership on Cummins Highway would seem to be unlikely candidates for redevelopment. But the properties, in Dorchester and Mattapan, have an unusual feature that makes them valuable right now: They are near the locations of planned stations on the Fairmount commuter rail line, which the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority has put on the fast track for improvements.

- [GRAPHIC Development plans near commuter rail upgrades](#)

Developers, mostly community organizations, have bought or are planning to buy and rebuild as many as a dozen properties along the 9.2-mile rail corridor. The projects typically involve

apartments or condominiums, some with a retail component, and are designed to take advantage of their proximity to transportation into downtown Boston.

"Up and down the Fairmount Line we are making sure we have an urban village around each stop," said Jeanne DuBois, executive director of the Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation.

Patrick administration transportation officials said they are committed to building the four new train stations, as well as making improvements to tracks and bridges and adding more frequent service for residents, who are now mainly served by bus lines. The new Fairmount stations, three in Dorchester and one in Mattapan, are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2011.

The new stations are at Newmarket, Four Corners, and Talbot Avenue in Dorchester, and in Mattapan Square. A fifth station has been proposed for Columbia Road in Dorchester.

The Fairmount Line now runs from South Station to the Readville section of Hyde Park. The long-term vision of the state and MBTA is to convert the commuter line to a rapid transit or light rail service, tentatively dubbed the Indigo Line.

The Fairmount improvements could be particularly crucial in the neighborhoods along the line, which include some of the city's poorest.

"We are looking for the benefits of economic development near the stations," said Marvin Martin, executive director of the Greater Four Corners Action Coalition. "History has shown that transit coming in has always been a catalyst to economic development."

The development proposed for the Four Corners neighborhood involves replacing an old industrial building with 24 cooperative apartments above first-floor shops. The developer, the Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation, also wants to build apartments with a retail presence on the site of an old garage on Talbot Avenue. Both would be short walks to the new stations.

Meanwhile, Dorchester Bay, DuBois's agency, has acquired several properties on Quincy Street in Dorchester near the proposed Columbia Road Station. And not far away, Dorchester Bay has recently finished the \$20 million Dudley Village, a five-building complex with 50 apartments and 6,000 square feet of first-floor commercial space. That development is a quarter-mile from the Fairmount Line's existing Uphams Corner Station.[Continued...](#)

The existing station on Morton Street has also drawn developers. The team of Judge Development LLC and Truong Enterprises is planning to build 28 condominiums and two stores at the site of a closed police station in Mattapan on one side of Morton Street. On the

other side of the street, the Mattapan Community Development Corporation is planning a 24-unit apartment and commercial building.

Farther down the Fairmount Line next to the new Mattapan Square Station, Community Builders, the country's largest urban nonprofit developer, has proposed building apartments on the site of a former auto dealership that closed decades ago.

And in Hyde Park near the existing Fairmount Station, the Southwest Boston Community Development Corporation is trying to acquire a city-owned building with an eye to converting it to a performing arts center.

DuBois said some of the community organizations are in the process of acquiring other properties for redevelopment. She declined to provide details since the matters are in negotiation.

In the current recession, the nonprofit community development corporations have certain advantages over for-profit developers. Without the need for profits, the organizations can operate on thinner margins. They also can take advantage of government lending and subsidies, and they can access capital offered by philanthropic lenders. Community development corporations also can form partnerships with for-profit developers.

"We're good at patching together deals," said DuBois. "We have a lot of different pots of money that probably give us more of a cushion."

The community organizations also have different goals than private developers, such as protecting the neighborhood from gentrification by the very projects that are improving it.

"On the one hand, you want economic development and investment, but you don't want the people who live there being pushed out of their own neighborhoods," DuBois said.

Opened in 1855, the Fairmount Line was one of Boston's first passenger railroads. It closed in 1944 and was reopened by the state in 1979. Today, it carries about 2,000 riders inbound daily, making it the smallest commuter line in the system. It is also the only MBTA commuter service entirely within the city of Boston.

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