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Roger Moliere, Metro's new property management executive, is excited by the development potential of the 18 acres of Metro-owned property surrounding the Red Line and Orange Line stations in North Hollywood.

Metro's New Property Chief Excited by Potential for Transit-Related Development

- Agency owns 114 acres of prime development sites
- Can attract more riders, lease income, new transit facilities

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(April 19, 2006) Roger Moliere, Metro's new property management chief, felt like a kid in a candy store when he first looked at the potential for transit-related development on the agency's lands.

"I was elated," Moliere recalls when he realized Metro owns more than 114 acres in strategic locations throughout the county. "I still am. It's terrific property."

A tall man who carries himself with dignity, Moliere, 62, joined Metro in January. He has spent his 35-year career in real estate law, acquisition, development and management – first in his native Indiana and then in Las Vegas, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

For the past 10 years, he was involved with the second-generation, \$1.5 billion redevelopment of LA County-owned property in Marina del Rey. As a deputy director of the Department of Beaches and Harbors, he also was responsible



Meet Roger Moliere,
Executive Officer ,
Real Property
Management and
Development

Roger Moliere joined Metro in January 2006 following 10 years with the LA County Department of Beaches and Harbors, where he was involved primarily with redevelopment of Marina del Rey.

He previously served as executive vice president with Minami California, Inc. of San Diego, a Tokyo-based real estate holding company. Earlier, he held top positions in real estate firms in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Las Vegas.

Moliere earned a BA from Albion College in Michigan and his law degree at the Valparaiso University School of Law, where he also was editor of the Law Review. He is a member of the Indiana State Bar Association and a fellow of the Indiana Bar Foundation.

Moliere and his wife, Christine, live in downtown Los Angeles and maintain a second home in San Diego County. They have a

for development along 31 miles of the county's oceanfront property.

daughter, Jennifer, who lives with her family in Indiana.

So, there's genuine excitement in Moliere's voice when he lays out the possibilities for joint development of such Metro properties as the almost 18 acres around the North Hollywood Metro station or the 12.5 acres at the Orange Line's Sepulveda station.

'Create a new community'

Development of the North Hollywood site could "create a new community or a city center" with some two million square feet of residential and commercial units. Requests for proposals should go out to developers this spring, once design guidelines are approved by Metro's Board of Directors.

At the Sepulveda station, Moliere envisions building a parking structure for customers' cars to free up the remainder of the 12.5-acre site for "a really tremendous development." Two additional properties at the Orange Line's Balboa station totaling four acres would be good locations for office buildings.

Moliere is responsible for a 21-member Real Estate staff which administers Metro's properties and works on joint development projects. He also looks to the Countywide Planning and Development staff for property design guidelines and transit-related community planning.

"Transportation-related development is a terrific way to increase ridership – our main goal – and we can do that by making the areas around our stations attractive," he says. Metro can expect regular increases in annual revenue "because our land is valuable and we can lease it for joint development."

In fact, Moliere sees joint development as a triple play for Metro.

Attracting transit riders

Residences, stores, restaurants and office buildings attract transit riders to areas where Metro facilities are located. Those facilities are built by the developer at no cost to Metro or the taxpayers. The agency also will realize 55 to 60 years of lease income – it won't sell the properties – from the developers.

And finally, Metro will recover the developed properties at the end of the lease period.

The list of 22 joint development sites Moliere keeps on his desk includes Metro properties ranging from the 23-acre Taylor Yards – an old rail yard that probably will be converted to housing – to a 6.4-acre site at the Blue Line's Artesia station to a tiny 0.8-acre site at 1st and Lorena along the Gold Line's Eastside Extension.

"Even the small ones, like Chavez and Soto at 3.5 acres," could include 150 apartment units and 50,000 square feet of retail space, Moliere says, noting that the proposed development will be up for approval at the Board's next meeting. "Metro will get about \$600,000 annually in rent, plus CPI adjustments of at least three percent per year."

He expects to see a groundbreaking this fall on a development at

Hollywood and Vine that will feature a luxury W Hotel and residential units. Developers planning residential and retail units at the Wilshire/Western Metro station should start that project this summer.

‘Sorting out the competition’

Metro “had a tremendous response” from requests for proposals on sites at Chavez and Soto and on 1st and Soto in East LA and is now “sorting out the competition to choose the best one,” Moliere says.

In the second half of 2006, Moliere expects developers will break ground at the MacArthur Park Metro station to build affordable housing and retail units.

He also anticipates a big mixed-use development to be built over Metro’s Division 7, leaving the transportation and maintenance operations at ground level. “The City of West Hollywood is really excited about this development. It’s in a popular area of the city.”

Further easing the way for transit-related development is local government interest in “master zoning” all the transportation corridors, Moliere says.

Cut the time required

Pre-zoning these areas could cut in half the usual two-to-three year time period required for a developer to line up all the necessary entitlements, zoning and building permits.

“We’re finding that, because most cities now understand what public transportation does for them, cities are volunteering to pre-zone,” he notes.

That realization among local officials may have been a while in coming, but Moliere believes the joint development projects in Metro’s future will benefit the general public by reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality as more people use transit.

He sees benefit for taxpayers as developers, not Metro, build some new transit facilities. Benefits for the region as transit-related developments create taxpaying businesses and more jobs for residents. And benefits for Metro as more and more people are able to choose transit on a daily basis.

“There’s an enormous amount of opportunity,” Moliere says. “We want to encourage developments that serve transportation.”