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Final piece of transit project faces vote

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The Pleasanton Planning Commission will decide tonight whether to approve the final piece of a transit-oriented project adjacent to the future West Dublin/Pleasanton BART station along Interstate 580.

San Diego-based Windstar Communities is proposing a mixed-use development with two apartment buildings totaling 350 residential units and 14,000 square feet of ground-floor retail on the Pleasanton parcel.

Developing the Pleasanton side of the 14-acre parcel

is the final part of Windstar's "transit village" on the BART-owned property, which straddles I-580 and sits within both Dublin and Pleasanton.

Windstar received Dublin's approval last year and expects to break ground on that parcel this summer. That property will house a 150-room hotel, 7,500 square feet of commercial space, 309 units of rental housing and eventually a 210-unit condo project.

Construction of the new \$80 million BART station is expected to be completed in

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2009 and should coincide with completion of the Dublin property, said Eric Heffner, senior vice president of Windstar.

The new BART station, which will be located in the 10-mile gap between the Castro Valley and the Dublin/Pleasanton BART stations, will serve as the core of the two projects.

"This truly is the definition of what transit-oriented development is," Heffner said. "Without that BART station being built there, we wouldn't be interested in building those projects here."

With increasing traffic congestion in the Tri-Valley area, particularly along I-580 during commute hours, city officials have been supportive of developments that look for alternative modes of transportation.

Heffner noted that since Windstar first considered the Pleasanton project, it

has upped the number of affordable housing units in the apartment complex. Instead of setting aside the required 15 percent of the units as affordable for certain levels of income, the company will set aside 20 percent — 70 units — for residents who make no more than 50 percent of the annual median income in Alameda County.

The state of California pegs the county's annual median income as \$60,300 in 2008.

"The city of Pleasanton needed some relief on their affordable housing initiatives ... and the state programs have some financing that was very attractive to us," Heffner said.

He added that increasing the affordability of the units was an important part of creating a truly transit-oriented development.

Housing on both sides of the station will be located within a quarter mile — or 10-minute walk — of Safeway, Target and Stoneridge mall. The developer may also consider establishing a Flexcar

program on-site, to allow residents to rent vehicles.

The two-story BART station building will be constructed in the I-580 median and will connect via pedestrian bridges over the freeway to the mixed use projects in Pleasanton and Dublin.

Four-story parking garages for BART patrons will also be constructed on each of the Pleasanton and Dublin station-area properties.

Staff writer Sophia Kazmi contributed to this story.