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## **DEVELOPER TAKES CREATIVE APPROACH TO GAINING COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

*OAKLAND, CA—The unique approach in gaining community support for a multifamily project in the up-and-coming Temescal neighborhood is the focus of this EXCLUSIVE Q&A with Cox Castle's Annie Mudge.*

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By Lisa Brown



Mudge shares creative approaches to getting a project approved.

tells GlobeSt.com in this exclusive Q&A.

OAKLAND, CA—San Francisco-based [Cox, Castle & Nicholson](#) partner Annie Mudge is currently working with a developer who is developing a multifamily project on the corner of 51st Street and Telegraph in Oakland's up-and-coming Temescal neighborhood. The developer's approach to gaining community support is unlike any other she has seen in her decades of working with developers in this region, she

Mudge says the developer is gaining community support by regularly attending community meetings to closely read the pulse of the community's millennial force, addressing the community directly to research needs and including aspects that would appeal to the overall community vibe.

GlobeSt.com: Give us an idea of the scope of the project.



Annie Mudge: The project is a 204-unit, 35,000-square-foot mixed use (retail/residential) project on a prominent corner in Oakland (51st and Telegraph) in the Temescal neighborhood. In the last 10 years, this neighborhood has experienced a significant renaissance and is widely known as an “up and coming neighborhood” with great food and quirky retail. In recent years, lots of young families have been moving back into the neighborhood.

GlobeSt.com: What specific examples can you share about how developers of this project worked with the community to directly address its needs?

Mudge: When this site was originally proposed for redevelopment in 2006, it was met with significant community opposition, mainly over height, traffic, parking and community character issues. Although the city ultimately approved a residential project in this location (I was serving on the planning commission at the time and cast a “yes” vote for the project), the approval process was bruising and height concessions were granted by the developer to win a “yes” vote from the city council. A few years after the city approved the original project, Nautilus Development purchased the property from the prior developer and set out to redesign the project (and to restore the previously proposed height and increase the density) as well as to redirect the negative energy from the neighborhood.

While this developer was helped by Oakland’s overall changing attitude toward denser urban development in general, it took specific steps to address the community’s concerns by offering the following amenities/community benefits: allowing interim use of the site (pre-construction) as a community garden, providing suitable ground floor space for a grocery store, proposing an urban farm on the roof top (open to the public) designed to produce vegetables for the neighborhood’s burgeoning number of restaurants, providing 17 integrated affordable units, reducing the parking ratio from 1.5 spaces/unit to .5 spaces per unit, offering car share services, electric vehicle charging stations and bicycle-friendly parking a bike share dock; and recordation of restrictive covenant, precluding future residents from obtaining a residential parking permit to park on surrounding neighborhood streets

The planning commission’s approval of the project on June 1, 2016 came with almost no community opposition. The city also determined that the project was exempt from CEQA.



GlobeSt.com: Is 11% affordable standard for this area of Oakland?

Mudge: The 11% affordable (providing 17 units) was proposed under the city's density bonus law which allows a 20% density bonus for providing 10% or more affordable housing. After the project was approved, the city adopted an affordable housing impact fee (from which the project was exempt) but the project's ratio of affordable units is comparable to other projects approved before the fee was adopted in which developers agreed to provide affordable units on an ad hoc basis.

GlobeSt.com: Everyone seems to ponder the best way to attract millennials. What is the secret to getting into the minds of millennials?

Mudge: The project's appeal to millennials is due to its embodiment of many tenets of sustainable local living: high density housing with an urban farm in a transit/yoga/organic food-accessible environment. It doesn't hurt that the developers are themselves millennials and spent a lot of time cultivating their peers who have been moving back into the neighborhood.

GlobeSt.com: What broad advice can you share about soliciting community support for development projects throughout the Bay Area?

Mudge: Be (or hire) hip young people to represent your project, cultivate the neighbors with community-oriented amenities while providing "social/environmental good" features to help the planet.