

# New Valley project will receive funds from state program

## *HANDS awarded nearly \$400K*

By John Zucal  
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Efforts to continue redeveloping the Valley section of Orange received a boost recently when state officials announced a grant to help fund a project.

Lori Grifa, commissioner of the state Department of Community Affairs, appeared during a Jan. 25 ceremony to announce that Housing and Neighborhood Development Services of Orange had been awarded \$397,500 for a project along Forest Street. A HANDS officials said the effort would turn a former firehouse and the Adams Bar into mixed-use commercial and residential units.

The project was one of three Grifa announced during the ceremony. The others recipients are in Camden and Jersey City.

Grifa said funding is being provided through TD Bank as part of the state's Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program. Corporations which contribute to a fund used to support redevelopment projects in low- and moderate-income municipalities by nonprofit organizations receive a 100-percent state tax credit.

Robin Gordon, HANDS administrative manager, said the project is a continuation of its work in the Valley section. "We rehabilitate these vacant, eyesore properties, using the Arts District as a template, then provide programs to enrich the neighborhood."

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She noted the project is part of the Heart of Orange Neighborhood Plan, which HANDS submitted last April to apply for the grant.

Previous projects have included commercial space which house arts-themed businesses and galleries as well as residential units. Gordon said this project, which is in the planning stage, will retain that process with commercial space and six apartments at an "affordable" rent.

She added HANDS hopes occupants of the new units will consider long-term residency.

"We're looking for people to move in and make a commitment to stay and improve the life of the neighborhood," said Gordon. "The more a neighborhood is alive, the more vibrancy is created and the safer the streets will become."

Grifa said the state program provides a maximum of \$10 million of tax credits through an equal amount of corporate contributions. She said the TD Bank contribution helped the program reach its maximum the earliest in a fiscal year since it began in 2003.