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Ideas for rail station sought



PALMDALE - City planners will conduct a workshop Wednesday for people to offer comments on a "framework plan" for what sorts of businesses, homes and recreational and cultural amenities should be emphasized in central Palmdale around the proposed California High-Speed rail station.

The "framework plan" anticipates demolishing 1,321 existing homes and apartment units and construction of 4,208 new units, as well as removal of 969,000 existing square feet of non-residential uses and construction of nearly 8.4 million square feet of new non-residential uses, including retail, office, industrial, and research and development uses by 2035, according to a recently released draft environmental impact report. There also would be 64.5 acres for open space and recreation.

"The release of the EIR for this project brings the city of Palmdale one step closer to establishing a land use framework at and around our future multi-modal high speed rail station that promotes mixed use development, access to different modes of transportation, job opportunities, shopping, recreation, culture and much more," city Transportation/Special Projects Manager Mike Behen said in the city's announcement of the workshop. "We welcome the public to come to the workshop to provide their feedback."

The workshop is 6:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Lilac Room at the Larry Chimbole Cultural Center, 38350 Sierra Highway, on the draft environmental impact report for the Palmdale Transit Oriented Development Framework Plan.

The public is invited to attend and express their comments and concerns regarding the environmental impact report, officials said.

City officials have been studying for three years what land uses and developments would be compatible around the future station for the high-speed rail system, which is under construction in the Central Valley but for which there is no funding at present to extend to Southern California.

Despite the lack of money, California High Speed Rail Authority officials are continuing engineering studies on the Southern California segments of the tracks, which are expected to run from Bakersfield through the Tehachapi Mountains to Lancaster and Palmdale, then through the San Gabriel Mountains to Burbank.

City officials envision a second, privately financed high-speed rail line from Las Vegas through Victorville ending in Palmdale as well.

Besides the "transit oriented development" study around the proposed high-speed rail station's location, city officials are also studying the area along Avenue Q, from Division Street west almost to 10th Street West, for future development.

The "transit oriented development" plan is "about creating walkable, pedestrian/bicycle/public transit friendly communities for people of all ages and incomes," Behen said in the city announcement. "Our vision is to create neighborhoods with more transportation and housing choices where residents can live work and play and maintain lifestyle that are convenient, affordable and active."

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The planning area for the "framework plan" covers approximately 1,035 acres, centered around the Palmdale Transportation Center used by Metrolink trains, Antelope Valley Transit Authority and other bus services and around the proposed location for the city's future High Speed Rail station, now envisioned to be built on Sixth Street East near Avenue Q.

The project planning area is generally bounded by Rancho Vista Boulevard (Avenue P) to the north and Palmdale Boulevard to the south and by the Antelope Valley Freeway to the west and 10th Street East to the east.

The "framework plan" is intended to guide future public improvements and private development within the area based on the past and on-going transportation, infrastructure, and planning projects, officials said.

The public also is invited to submit written comments about the draft environmental report. Comments must be sent by 6 p.m. Nov. 8 to: Senior Planner Carlene Saxton, city of Palmdale, 38250 Sierra Highway, Palmdale, CA, 93550, or by email to csaxton@cityofpalmdale.org

Copies of the draft environmental impact report are available for review at the Palmdale City Library, 700 Est Palmdale Blvd., and at Palmdale City Hall's Department of Economic and Community Development, Planning Division, located at 38250 Sierra Highway.

The Planning Division office is open 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

The report also is available for review at www.CityofPalmdale.org/TOD/documents.

For details, contact Behen by email at mbehen@cityofpalmdale.org or Saxton at csaxton@cityofpalmdale.org or at (661) 267-5200.

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