

# Palmdale TOD Overlay Zone Project

## Summary of Community Workshop #1

December 2014



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## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Background and Key Themes .....</b>	<b>1</b>
	TOD Overlay Zone Project.....	1
	Workshop Program .....	1
	Summary of Key Themes .....	4
<b>2</b>	<b>Discussion of Community Priorities.....</b>	<b>5</b>
	Land Use and Development.....	5
	Circulation and Streetscape .....	6

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# I Background and Key Themes

The City of Palmdale is currently engaged in two studies that may result in changes to the General Plan, specific plans, and zoning, in order to realize the City's vision for transit-oriented development. As part of the process for both efforts, a public workshop was held to share progress on the efforts and get feedback from community members. The TOD Overlay Zone project is briefly summarized below, followed by a summary of the workshop program. Issues and priorities raised by community members during the workshop are provided in Chapter 2, along with the marked-up maps. Feedback on the Avenue Q Feasibility Study is provided in a separate report.

## **TOD Overlay Zone Project**

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The TOD Overlay project aims to help bring about transit-oriented development (TOD) around the Palmdale Transportation Center (PTC) by addressing regulatory constraints and updating the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance and Palmdale Transit Village Specific Plan (PTVSP). In addition, street and trail improvements will be identified to make it easier and more pleasant to get around without a car. Increasing development within walking and biking distance of transit, jobs and shopping can support affordable, healthy lifestyles. The project is undertaken in the context of major planned or proposed transportation investments including California High Speed Rail, which could place this district in a position of regional significance. The project will result in regulatory changes related to land use, circulation, and streetscape and urban design in support of TOD.

The TOD Overlay Study Area is located between Rancho Vista Boulevard (Avenue P) and Palmdale Boulevard (SR-138) and between SR-14 and 10<sup>th</sup> Street East. The Palmdale Regional Airport is located approximately one mile northeast of the PTC. Within the Study Area, a Focus Area is identified, to ensure that the greatest level of attention is paid to the core area generally between the PTC and the Civic Core.

## **Workshop Program**

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The first community workshop for the two planning efforts was held on Saturday, November 15, 2014, from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at Yucca Elementary School in Palmdale (in the TOD Study Area.) The workshop included presentations from City Staff and consultants, and an open discussion time for community members to interact with presentation materials and members of the planning team.

The workshop began with a brief welcome from Mike Behen of the City of Palmdale, and an overview of the two efforts from the City's two project managers, Carlos Contreras and Juan

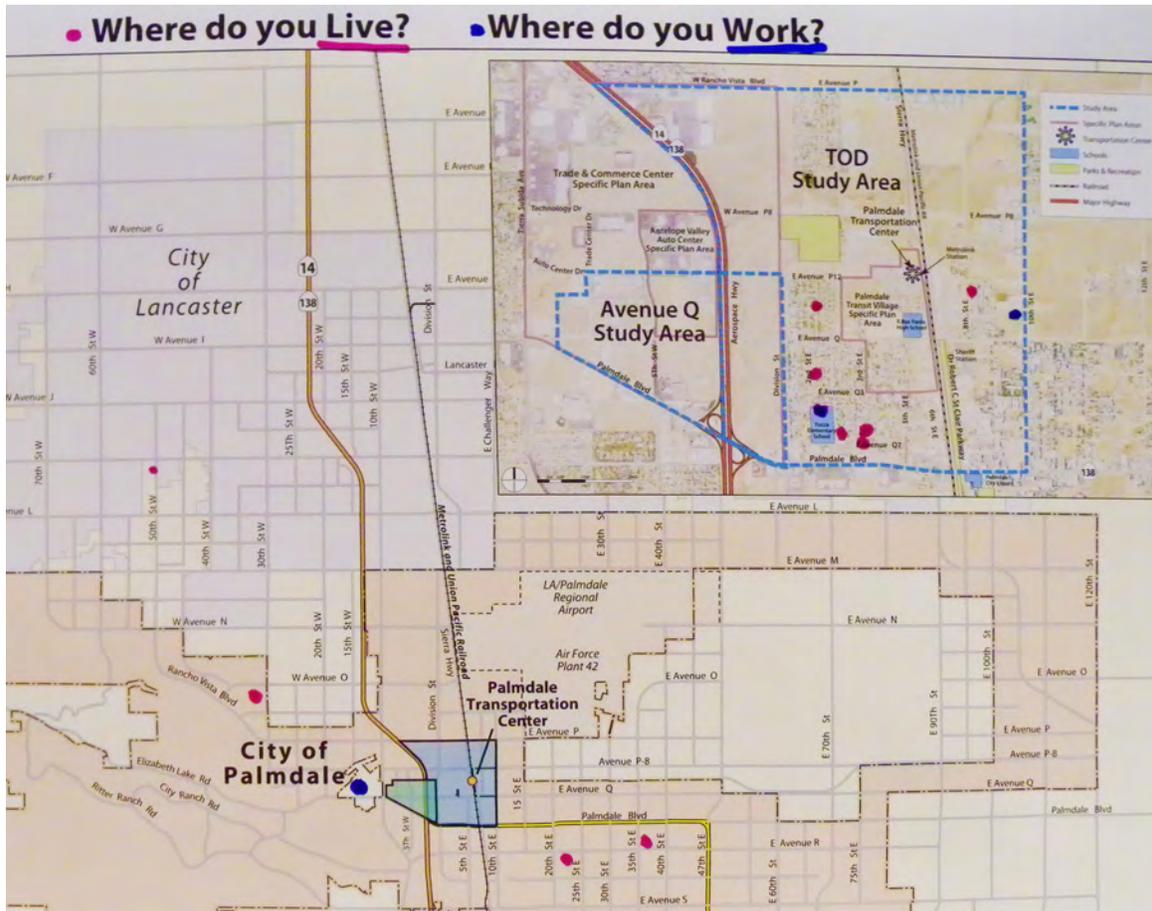
## City of Palmdale TOD Overlay Zone Project

Carrillo. Martha Miller of Dyett & Bhatia then described the land use and development setting of the Study Area for the TOD Overlay project. Patrick Siegman of Nelson\Nygaard provided context about the major transportation projects being planned separately for the area. Peter Winch (Dyett & Bhatia) presented the physical setting of the Avenue Q Study Area, and the question being asked: whether it would be a good place for transit-oriented development and enhanced connection to the Palmdale Transportation Center.

Community members were then encouraged to visit the four “stations” that were set up around the room, one each focusing on land use and circulation issues for each of the two study areas. During this open discussion period, a member of the planning team was at each station to get feedback and answer questions. At each station, presentation exhibits included maps, graphics and text providing an overview of key issues. A blank map was provided on which people noted their ideas and concerns. A large notepad was also available for both community members and members of the planning team to record notes, capturing the main ideas of conversations. City Staff wrapped up the event with a brief “thank you” to community members, and a summary of next steps.

About 25 community members attended the workshop. Based on a map provided near the sign-in table, at least six families that live in the TOD Study Area were represented, along with two people who work in the Study Area. Others came from other parts of Palmdale.

Figure I-1: Where Do You Live? Where Do You Work?



## Summary of Key Themes

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Community members who came to the workshop provided valuable feedback on what they envisioned for the TOD Study Area, and what their concerns were. These are summarized here, and described in more detail in the next chapter.

- Build a downtown area around the station, including mixed-use development, tall buildings, shops, cultural attractions, upper-level apartments and condos, and a modern appearance.
- Feature restaurants, nightlife, and entertainment—things that are lacking in Palmdale today.
- Provide a strong, convenient, multi-modal connection to the Avenue Q Feasibility Study Area to draw people out of the future High Speed Rail station into Palmdale.
- Consolidate parking in centralized garages or underground, to support a dense, walkable environment.
- Ensure that existing residential neighborhoods are maintained and improved, and should be seen as assets.
- Incorporate parks and community gathering spaces, to improve the area's appearance and create recreational, social and educational opportunities.
- Provide a high-quality walking environment with pedestrian amenities, trees, and shops.
- Extend the parkway and trail parallel to the rail tracks to the south, with more amenities.

## 2 Discussion of Community Priorities

This chapter summarizes the issues and priorities identified by community members in the area of land use and development in the TOD Study Area. These are based on the notes from the large notepads and maps provided at each “station.” In practice, a mix of ideas on all topics was on each map. All four maps are included below.

### Land Use and Development

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#### CREATING A DOWNTOWN CHARACTER IN THE STATION AREA

People at the workshop envisioned building a downtown around the station area. The combination of rail service and downtown was seen as “good for the city.” One suggestion included relocating R. Rex Parris High School, indicating an openness to create more space to develop the new district.

Several people wanted to see high-rise, mixed-use development near the station, with residential on upper floors and retail and commercial uses and parking below. One comment described a “European style,” while others described “high-rise” and “tall buildings.” High-density residential development and senior living were both cited, as well as shops and a “cultural focus to bring people from LA.”

One comment indicated that the area should “reflect Palmdale,” with characteristics including high-tech, modern, and forward-thinking.

#### RESTAURANTS AND NIGHTLIFE

Workshop participants talked about the desire to have more things to do in Palmdale, noting the lack of movie theaters and that the only place to go is the mall. One comment noted that an a district with restaurants, bars, and entertainment near the station would “tie it all together.” Another comment suggested entertainment should be incorporated within the station itself. One person imagined eating areas in a walkable district, with garden and sidewalk dining.

On maps, one person envisioned something like “The Grove” (in Los Angeles) on Avenue P-14 extending west from the Palmdale Transportation Center area. One person drew a pedestrian promenade lined with buildings, extending both north and south from Avenue Q between Division Street and Highway 14 on currently vacant land. Another person marked an area of theater, entertainment, and restaurants on the southern portion of this land. These ideas are notably not directly adjacent to the PTC.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT AND SAFETY**

Several people expressed the importance of keeping the existing single-family neighborhoods in the TOD Study Area. Comments showed concern about relocation and impacts to property owners, and did not want to see existing houses demolished. People said that they would like to see improvements, or “some modernization.” One person suggested incentives to rehabilitate housing, and another wanted to “give a face lift to rundown areas.” The existing neighborhood north of Avenue Q between 3<sup>rd</sup> Street East and Division Street was specifically noted in three comments (including map mark-ups) as an asset that should be maintained and improved. One community member talked about the value of having a single-family neighborhood close to the PTC, where it would be easy for seniors to live and get around without a car. Another person described the need to give residents in that neighborhood certainty about the neighborhood’s place in the plan, so that they will feel secure in investing in their property.

Multiple people felt it was important for safety to be a priority. One comment identified the need for a police sub-station to provide a local police presence, and even suggested that showing police on Segways in Plan renderings would help send a reassuring message. A potential police sub-station was marked on one map, in the vicinity of Avenue Q and 4<sup>th</sup> Street East.

## **PARKS AND COMMUNITY SPACES**

Several people said they would like to see more parks in the area. One note suggested “more things for people; recreational and social [activities] for all ages,” emphasizing the social aspect of parks. Along these lines, a community center for people of all ages was also suggested.

Another comment identified a large potential park site between Division Street and Highway 14, describing it as a “beautiful green space,” emphasizing it as a feature to improve the area’s look and image.

Community gardens were discussed by at least two people. One imagined a role for students, and a farmers’ market.

## **Circulation and Streetscape**

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### **WALKING ENVIRONMENT**

Community members said they wanted the TOD Study Area to include a better walking environment. Streetscape design was cited as an important factor, along with parks, stores, benches and trees. One note envisioned a “welcoming main street off of the main traffic thoroughfare.” This idea was mirrored by the map note of a pedestrian promenade lined with buildings, extending to the north and south of Avenue Q between Division Street and Highway 14.

Community members identified several examples for the type of walking environment they wanted. Two comments noted Lancaster Boulevard, citing benches and a nice place to hang out. Others looked to 3rd Street Promenade in Santa Monica; Old Pasadena and Del Mar Station in Pasadena; and even Las Ramblas in Barcelona.

## **MULTIMODAL CONNECTIONS**

Map notes showed an interest in the idea of creating a multimodal connection from the future High Speed Rail station along the Avenue Q corridor, making access into and out of the area easier without a car. To the west, the existing wide right-of-way was seen as an opportunity for multi-modal travel (i.e., transit, bikes, and pedestrians, as well as cars).

The future transit connection would draw people out of the future station with something fun, interesting modern, and obvious. The commenter felt it should be a “people mover” or other contemporary mechanism, not a trolley which is too typically “main street America” and doesn’t reflect the uniqueness of Palmdale.

Bicycle facilities were also specifically called out along Avenue Q on both sides of the rail line, and a connection across the rail line was shown.

## **PARKWAYS AND TRAILS**

Two comments described the need for “more green” or “more trees,” with one specifically envisioning the Highway 14 corridor as looking like a parkway. On maps, another community member identified an extension of the Robert C. St. Clair Parkway along the rail line, to connect south to the creek, and to include more lighting and pedestrian amenities.

## **PARKING**

Several people had ideas about how parking should be accommodated in the future transit-oriented district. Two commenters described ways of consolidating parking so that space wouldn’t be wasted in surface parking lots. One suggested centralized parking structures, and another suggested underground parking.

Two other comments considered the way parking is provided in the center median area of the redesigned Lancaster Boulevard. These commenters felt that arrangement was dangerous for people getting out of cars, or simply advised against this design.

Figure 2-1: TOD Study Area Maps

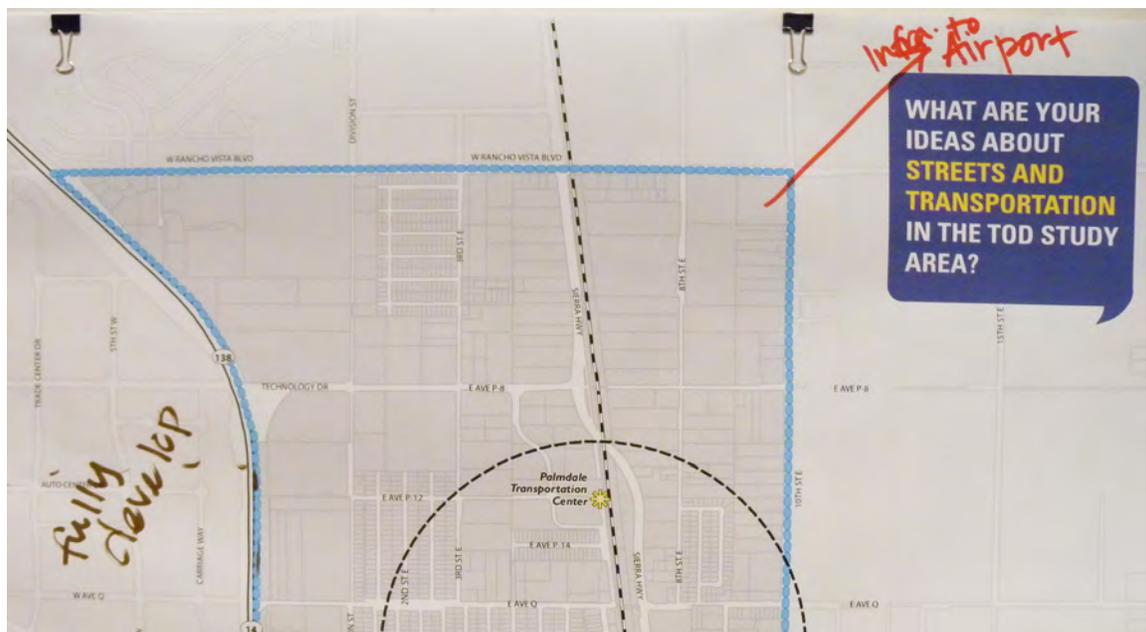
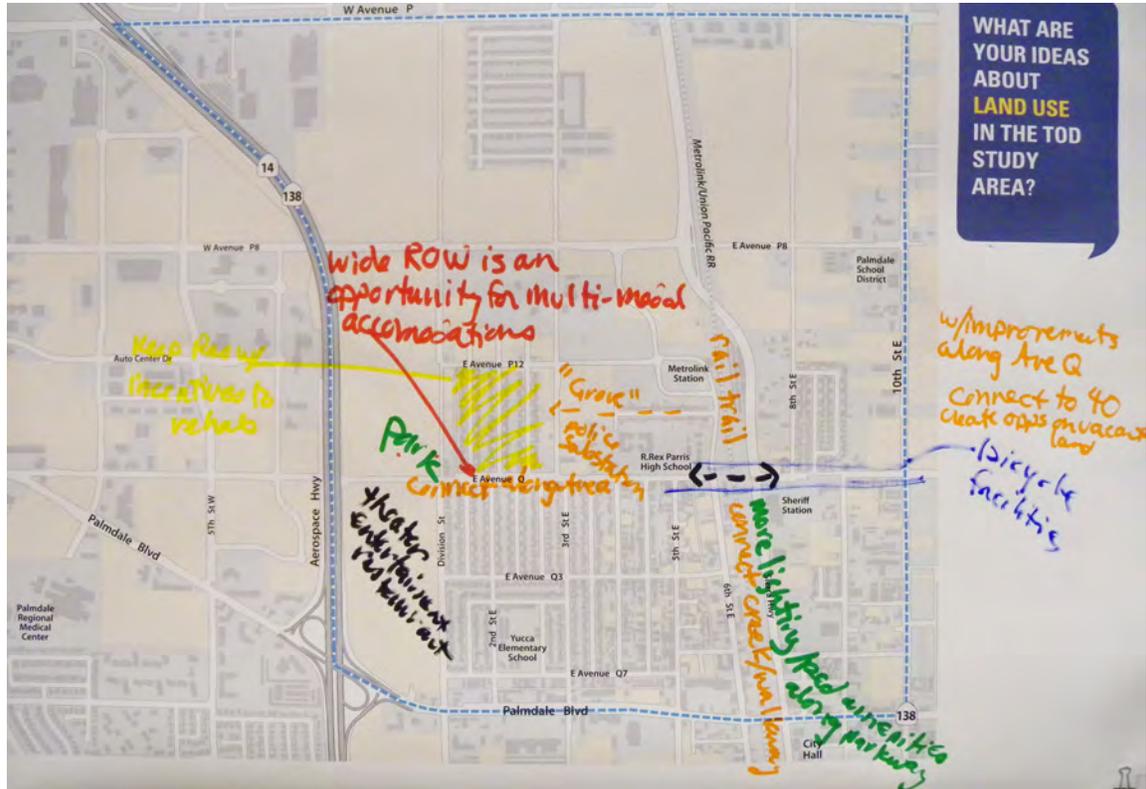
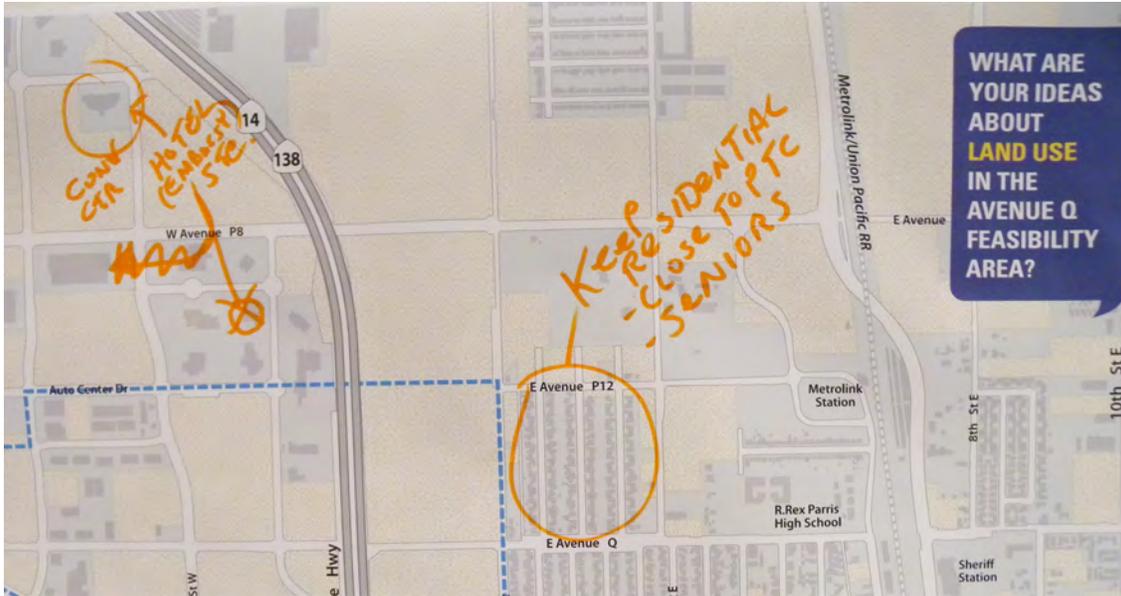


Figure 2-2: Avenue Q Study Area Maps



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