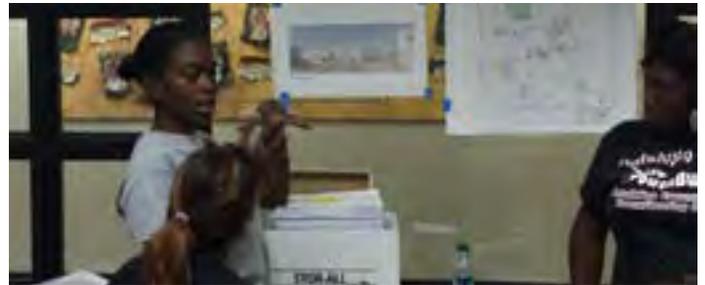


City of Palmdale TOD Overlay Zone Project Livability Audit Report



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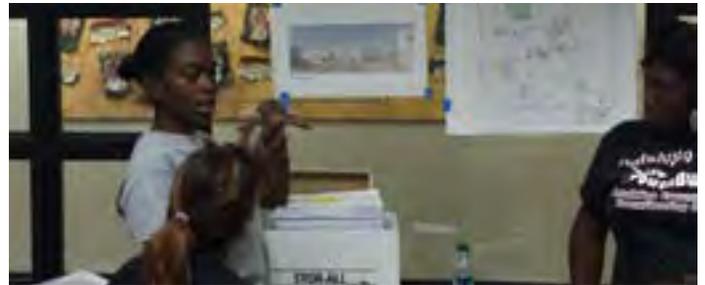


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Livability Audit Report

Overview

TOD OVERLAY PROJECT

The City of Palmdale is in the process of creating a TOD Overlay Zone that will bring Transit Oriented Development (TOD) to the area around the Palmdale Transportation Center. The goal of the project is to make it easier and more enjoyable for people to live, work and get around the area. The project is currently in its initial phase, which is focused on data collection and existing conditions analysis. The research being conducted during this phase will provide a critical foundation that will inform the final TOD Overlay Zone.

LIVABILITY AUDIT

One of the primary goals of the TOD Overlay Zone project is to increase the livability of the area around the Palmdale Transportation Center. Livability is a measurement of how safe, healthy and comfortable a place feels. A place might be considered “livable” if people feel comfortable getting around and have easy access to the services they need and the places they enjoy. To promote livability around the PTC, the project aims to make it easier and more enjoyable for people to live, work and get around the area.

In order to collect data on the existing conditions of livability in the project’s Focus Area, seven students and two teachers from the Antelope Valley YouthBuild, Advancing Communities Together (ACT) program conducted a Livability Audit. During the audit, students documented and categorized public transit routes, bike facilities, pedestrian facilities, recreation areas, community resources and services, wayfinding elements, and landmarks found in the Focus Area. They were also given the opportunity to express their views and ideas for improvements they would like to see to the Focus Area.

Goals

Collaborating with ACT participants was a benefit to both the TOD Overlay Zone project and to the educational goals of the participants. The overall goals of the Livability Audit were as follows:

- Introduce participants to the TOD Overlay Zone project
- Map the locations of public transit routes, bike facilities, pedestrian amenities and hindrances, recreation areas, community resources and services, wayfinding elements and landmarks in the project’s Focus Area
- Identify opportunities and constraints as they relate to TOD

Findings

The following data and observations were collected during the Livability Audit. These findings are in no way an exhaustive account of all resources, services and amenities found in the Focus Area. However, they do provide a good snapshot of the current state of livability in each of the following categories.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

As shown in Figure 1, buses were observed running along key corridors, such as Palmdale Boulevard, Sierra Highway, 10th Street East, 6th Street East and portions of East Avenue Q. Additionally, Metrolink trains were observed traveling to and from the PTC. However, it was noted that the relatively infrequent headways of these options would make public transit inconvenient as a primary transportation option. As one participant explained, “I usually have to be 30 minutes early or 30 minutes late due to the lack of transportation.”

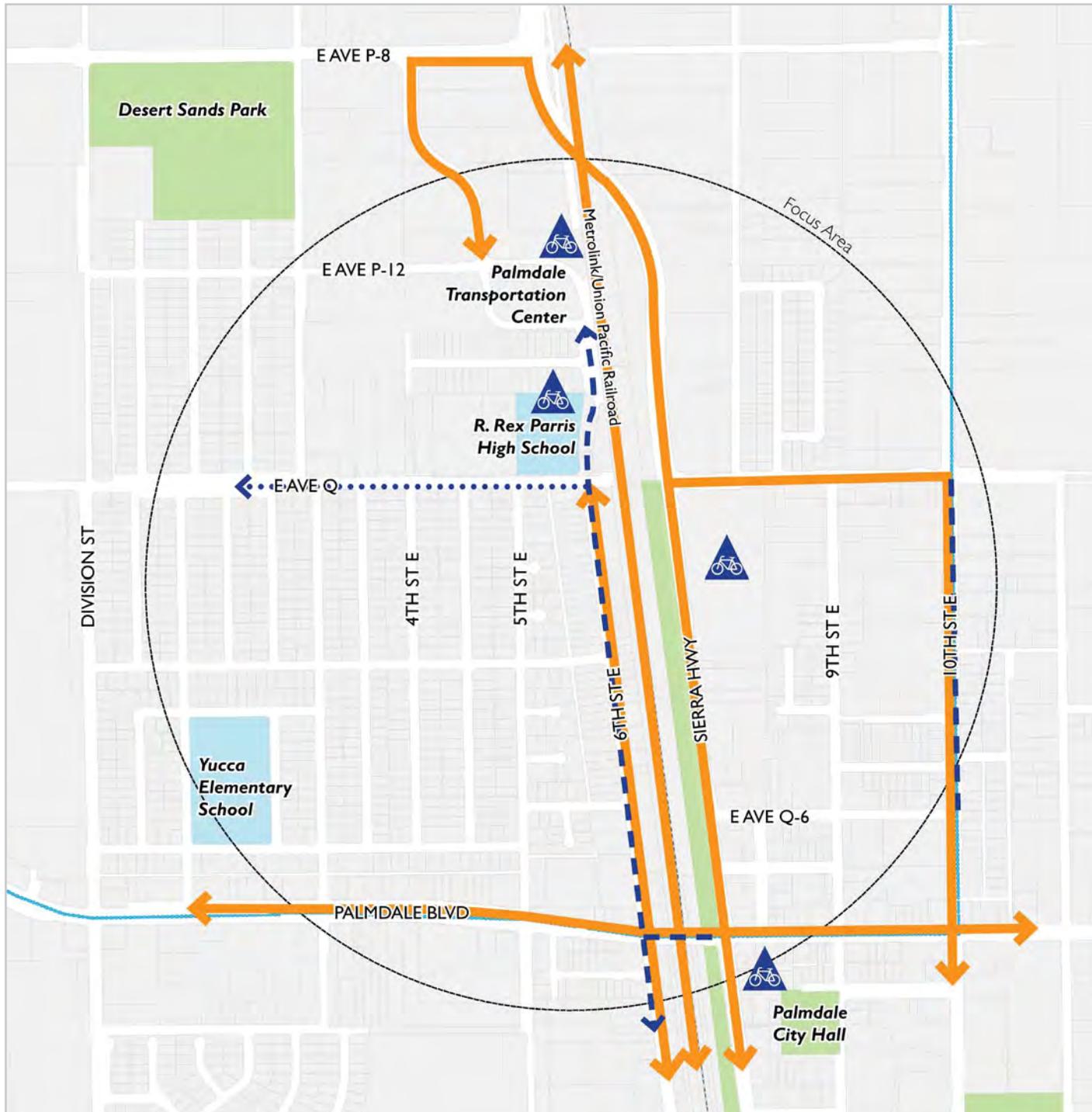
BIKE INFRASTRUCTURE

Though there were some bicyclists spotted throughout the Focus Area, participants agreed that there is a lack of adequate bike infrastructure in the area. Few designated bike lanes were identified during the audit, though one notably traveled directly to the PTC by way of 6th Street East. Bike lanes were also observed to be discontinuous, often with faded paint lines and/or poor signage marking them. Bike racks were noticed at several key locations, such as the PTC, R. Rex Parris High School, the sheriff station and the library. However, for bicyclists traveling to other destinations, safe and secure bike parking is lacking in the area. The locations of observed designated bike lanes, shared lanes and bike racks are shown in Figure 1.

PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

In terms of walkability, a couple of places stood out to participants as providing a great pedestrian experience. First, the PTC offers a good pedestrian environment as a result of its landscaping, seating and public restrooms. Second, many participants pointed to the Dr. Robert C. St. Clair Parkway as a particularly enjoyable pedestrian experience. The parkway is well shaded, landscaped and completely separated from cars. It also provides seating options with several benches and picnic tables.

However, many other parts of the Focus Area were observed to be potentially unsafe for pedestrians due to a lack of infrastructure or safety concerns. As shown in Figure 2, discontinuous sidewalks and a lack of crosswalks make for difficult and unsafe pedestrian experiences in several locations. Additionally, participants identified the crossings of the railroad tracks at Sierra Highway and Palmdale Boulevard as particularly dangerous intersections for pedestrians. The intersection at Sierra Highway lacks both crosswalks and sidewalks, making it difficult and unsafe for pedestrians coming from the east side of Sierra Highway to reach the PTC.



**Figure 1:
Observed Public Transit and Bike
Infrastructure**

-  Public transit route
-  Designated bike lane (*bikes only*)
-  Shared lane (*bikes and cars together*)
-  Bike rack

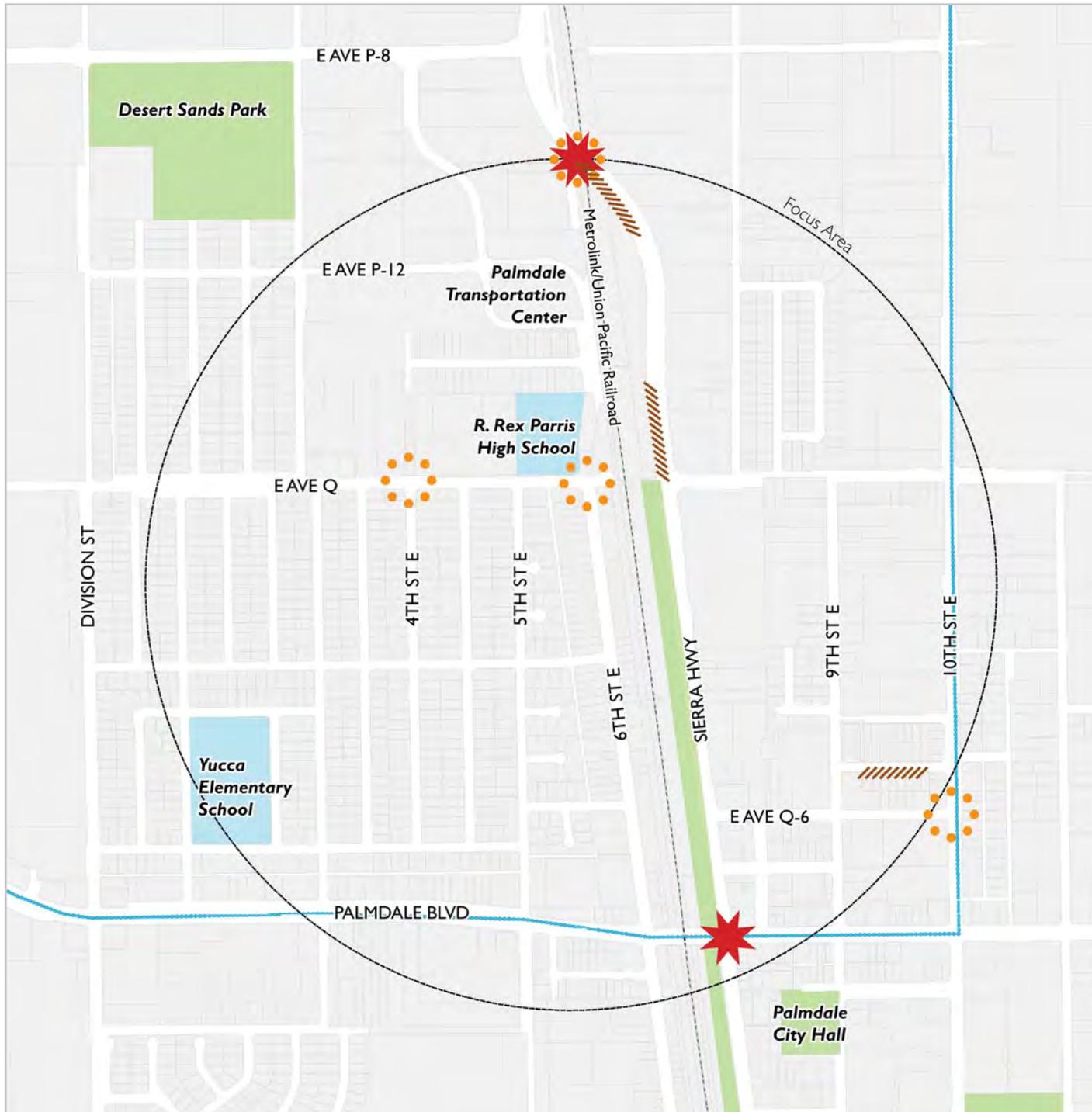


Figure 2:
Observed Pedestrian Hindrances

-  Discontinuous sidewalk
-  Crosswalks needed
-  Intersection perceived as unsafe for pedestrians

COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Participants identified a number of community resources and services, which are listed in Table 1 and shown in Figure 3. In addition to the PTC, sheriff station and public schools found in the Focus Area, South Valley WorkSource Center and Planned Parenthood offer important services to Palmdale residents. Also, while not in the project Study Area, the Palmdale City Library is located in the Focus Area and was identified by multiple participants as an important community resource, as it is the only public library in the city.

Table 1: Community Resources and Services Identified by Students

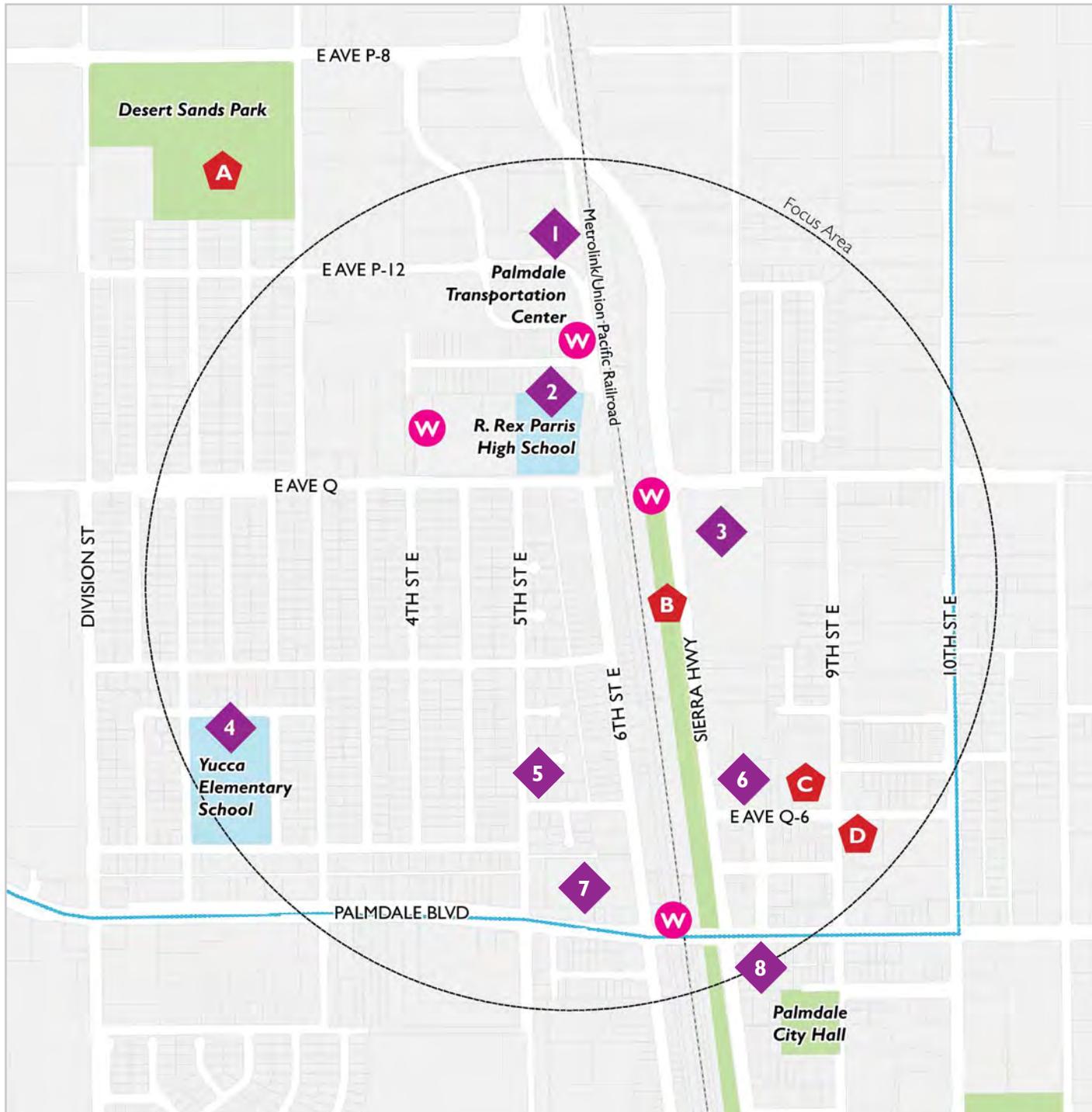
<i>#</i>	<i>Resource/Service</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	Palmdale Transportation Center	39000 Clock Tower Plaza Dr	Transit hub
2	R. Rex Harris High School	38801 Clock Tower Plaza Dr	Public high school
3	Palmdale Sheriff Station	750 E Avenue Q	Substation for LA County
4	Yucca Elementary School	38440 2 nd St E	Public elementary school
5	Palmdale Dream Center	385185 5 th St E	Transitional housing for homeless young adults
6	South Valley WorkSource Center	38510 Sierra Hwy	Assistance for job seekers
7	Planned Parenthood	553 E Palmdale Blvd #533	Sexual and reproductive health services
8	Palmdale City Library	700 E Palmdale Blvd	Public library

RECREATION AREAS

Within the Focus Area, the Dr. Robert C. St. Clair Parkway and the Hammack Activity Center were noted as the primary opportunities for recreation. As discussed earlier, participants viewed the parkway as a great addition to the city. Several participants expressed a desire for it to be extended and to include additional amenities, such as water fountains. On the other hand, while the Hammack Activity Center provides recreation opportunities, its run down appearance makes it look somewhat abandoned. Many participants said they did not realize that the building was still in use and feared that residents would not take advantage of it due to a lack of signage.

In addition to these recreation opportunities, participants observed a private gymnastics studio in close proximity to the Hammack Activity Center and acknowledged Desert Sands Park, located just outside the Focus Area. A desire for more recreation areas was expressed, especially ones that would accommodate people of all ages. As one participant pointed out, “More recreational places will help our youth as well as our elderly.”

Recreation areas observed during the Livability Audit are listed in Table 2 and shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:
Observed Community Resources,
Services, Recreation Areas and
Wayfinding Elements**

- ◆ Resource or service
- ◆ Recreation area
- ⊙ Wayfinding element

Table 2: Recreation Areas

	<i>Recreation Area</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Description</i>
A	Desert Sands Park	39000 Clock Tower Plaza Dr	Public park with picnic facilities, sports fields and a playground
B	Dr Robert C St Clair Parkway	Sierra Highway, between E Avenue Q and Palmdale Blvd	Bike and pedestrian greenway
C	Hammack Activity Center	815 E Avenue Q-6	Recreation center that houses the AV Boys and Girls Club
D	AV Twisters Gymnastics Academy	902 E Avenue Q-6	Private gymnastics studio

WAYFINDING

In general, participants found signage and wayfinding elements in the Focus Area to be lacking. Although the orthogonal street grid pattern helps with orientation and navigation, participants observed few signs that directed people where to go. Beyond the signage at the entrance to the PTC, only one additional sign indicating its location was spotted during the audit. Despite its prime location on Palmdale Boulevard near the intersection of Sierra Highway, this sign was small, and many participants said they had never noticed it before. The only other observed wayfinding elements were the signage marking the start of the Dr Robert C St Clair Parkway and a wayfinding map for a new multifamily residential complex located on 4th Street East. The locations of these wayfinding elements are shown in Figure 3.

LANDMARKS

The PTC and library were both identified as potential landmarks located in the Focus Area. However, it was noted that the entrances of both places were not easily visible from major streets. Participants expressed that the Focus Area lacks a recognizable and visible landmark that “makes Palmdale stand out.”

Looking Ahead

PROPOSALS

After mapping and categorizing the resources, services and amenities that were observed in the Focus Area, participants were given the opportunity to express their views and ideas for improvements they would like to see. Working in groups of 2-3, proposals were created for the Focus Area. In addition to making general recommendations, each group was also assigned a specific corridor to redesign to promote walkability and livability.

All proposals highlighted the importance of making the Focus Area more inviting to bicyclists and pedestrians. They promoted introducing new services and amenities into the area, with many specifically mentioning the need for a homeless shelter or soup kitchen. Each group expressed the desire to make the area feel like a special destination in Palmdale that would draw both residents and visitors. The specifics of each of the four proposals are detailed on the following pages.

Group I

Key Ideas:

- Add more bike lanes and bike trails to allow people to ride safely throughout the entire Focus Area.
- Incorporate more recreation opportunities such as a new rec center at Desert Sands Park or a new water park.
- Add more trees to the Dr. Robert C. St. Clair Parkway so that the majority of the path is shaded.
- Create a Park and Ride in the Focus Area, possibly in the vacant land at the intersection of Avenue Q and Division.
- Incorporate a community garden into the area.
- Create a food court (possibly with food trucks) in the area around the PTC to increase food options within walking distance of the station.
- Add a local train or shuttle with convenient and frequent routes to destinations around the Focus Area.
- Add more services, such as a homeless shelter or food pantry, in the open parking lot by the Hammack Activity Center.

Avenue Q

Group One proposes adding sidewalks, crosswalks, street trees and lights to make Avenue Q safer and more appealing to pedestrians. They suggest adding a stoplight to reduce speeding, and a designated bike lane to encourage people to ride their bikes to R. Rex Parris High School and the PTC. Additionally, they propose using some of the vacant land adjacent to the high school to create a food court, possibly with a barber or beauty shop, to draw people to the area.



Group One's Vision for Avenue Q

Group 2

Key Ideas:

- Put a sculpture of a large book in front of the library at the intersection of Sierra Highway and Palmdale Boulevard to serve as a landmark.
- Create a YouthBuild Community Center to help others and offer tutoring services.
- In the vacant land on the west side of Division, provide a soup kitchen for the homeless that offers showers and other amenities.
- Create a Teen Center that offers activities like singing or dancing.
- Add bike racks everywhere.

6th Street East

Group Two reimagines 6th Street East as a pedestrian street, closed to vehicular traffic. The street would be lined with shops and cafes offering ethnic food. Rows of street trees and lights strung over the street would create a festive, inviting atmosphere. A new hotel near the PTC would give visitors coming into Palmdale by rail a place to stay. Serving as a link between the PTC and downtown, the new 6th Street East would provide a space for community events to bring together people from different parts of town.



Group Two's Vision for 6th Street East

Group 3

Key Ideas:

- Create a landmark at the PTC by introducing artwork by local youth or creating a stage for local artists.
- Put eateries around the PTC for people getting off the trains.
- Add more buses and more bus routes to better serve the area.
- Incorporate chess tables to the park to appeal to mixed ages.
- Add a water element, such as an interactive fountain to the park.
- Introduce street trees to offer shade for pedestrians.
- Put in additional crosswalks and sidewalks to improve walkability.
- Add a homeless shelter to the community. Put yellow collection bins around the area so people can donate supplies to the homeless shelter.
- Put water fountains in the Dr. Robert C. St. Clair Parkway.
- Create a landmark sculpture of a book in front of the library at the corner of Palmdale Boulevard and Sierra Highway. The pages of the book could contain a history of the city.

Palmdale Boulevard

Group Three envisions a gateway that spans over Palmdale Boulevard, welcoming people to the city. They also propose adding bike infrastructure, including separated bike lanes with buffer posts and ample bike rack parking along the boulevard. Finally, they suggest using landscaping, such as uniform Jacaranda trees down the medians and along the sidewalks to provide shade and help create a distinctive sense of place.



Group Three's Vision for Palmdale Boulevard

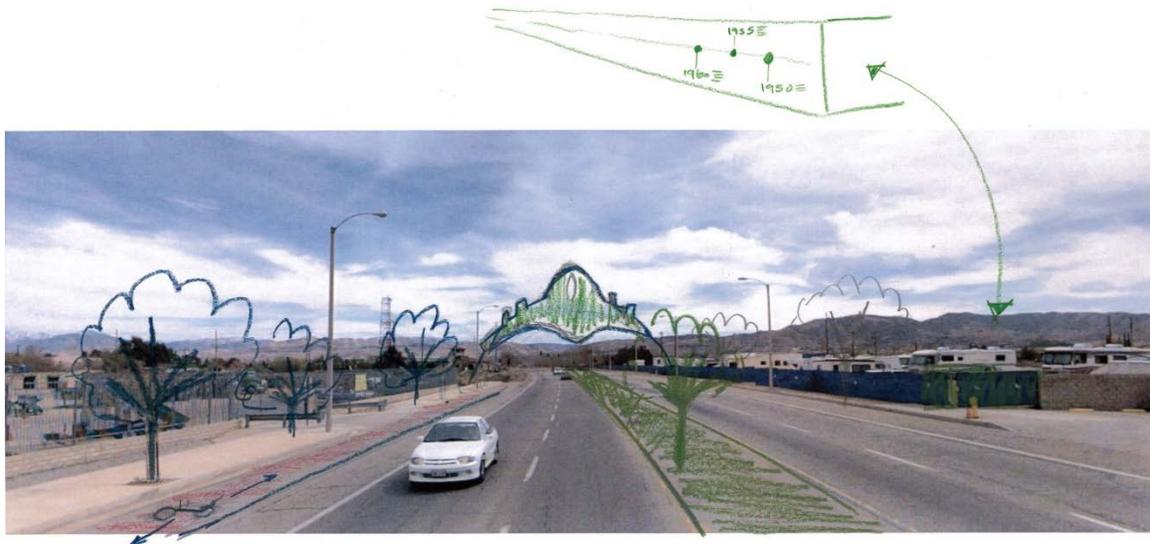
Group 4

Key Ideas:

- Create more community areas, such as an additional community park with basketball courts in one of the vacant lots.
- Line the sidewalks and medians of Sierra Boulevard with trees and landscaping to provide beauty and shade for pedestrians.
- Create a continuous bike path along Sierra Highway.
- Mark the intersection of Sierra Highway and Palmdale Boulevard as a central hub.

Sierra Highway

Group Four proposes making Sierra Highway a distinct and prominent spine through Palmdale. The corridor has a significant history as it was once the main route to Los Angeles from the area, and still serves as a link to Lancaster. To highlight this historical significance, this group proposes creating an art installation of a timeline of city development that could run along the street. This group also envisions the construction of a gateway and/or pedestrian path over Sierra Highway that would serve as a distinct landmark near the central hub of Sierra Highway and Palmdale Boulevard. As a nod to the aerospace industry, which is of significant regional economic importance, the gateway could take the form of a jet.



Group Four's Vision for Sierra Highway

Appendix A:

List of Participants

AV YOUTHBUILD STUDENTS

Darwin Alvarado

Keisha Brooks

Edward Cruz

Zorayda Fuentes

Bianca Johnson

Donavin Johnson

Zero Moreno

AV YOUTHBUILD STAFF

Lori Gilroy

Matt Killian

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Appendix B:

TOD Overlay Zone Livability Audit Schedule

INTRODUCTION (9:00 - 9:45)

- Welcome and Project Introduction (15 minutes)
- Study Area and Focus Area Overview (10 minutes)
- Mapping Exercise Overview (20 minutes)

MAPPING EXERCISE (9:45 - 12:45)

- Divide students into pairs (5 minutes)
- Walk through the Focus Area (~3 hours)

LUNCH BREAK (12:45 - 1:15)

- Lunch provided at Development Services (30 minutes)

DATA ANALYSIS (1:15 - 2:15)

- Data Compilation (30 minutes)
- Discussion and Reflection (30 minutes)

LOOKING AHEAD (2:15- 3:45)

- Inspiration Slide Show (15 minutes)
- Design (35 minutes)
- Presentation (20 minutes)
- Final Reflection (20 minutes)

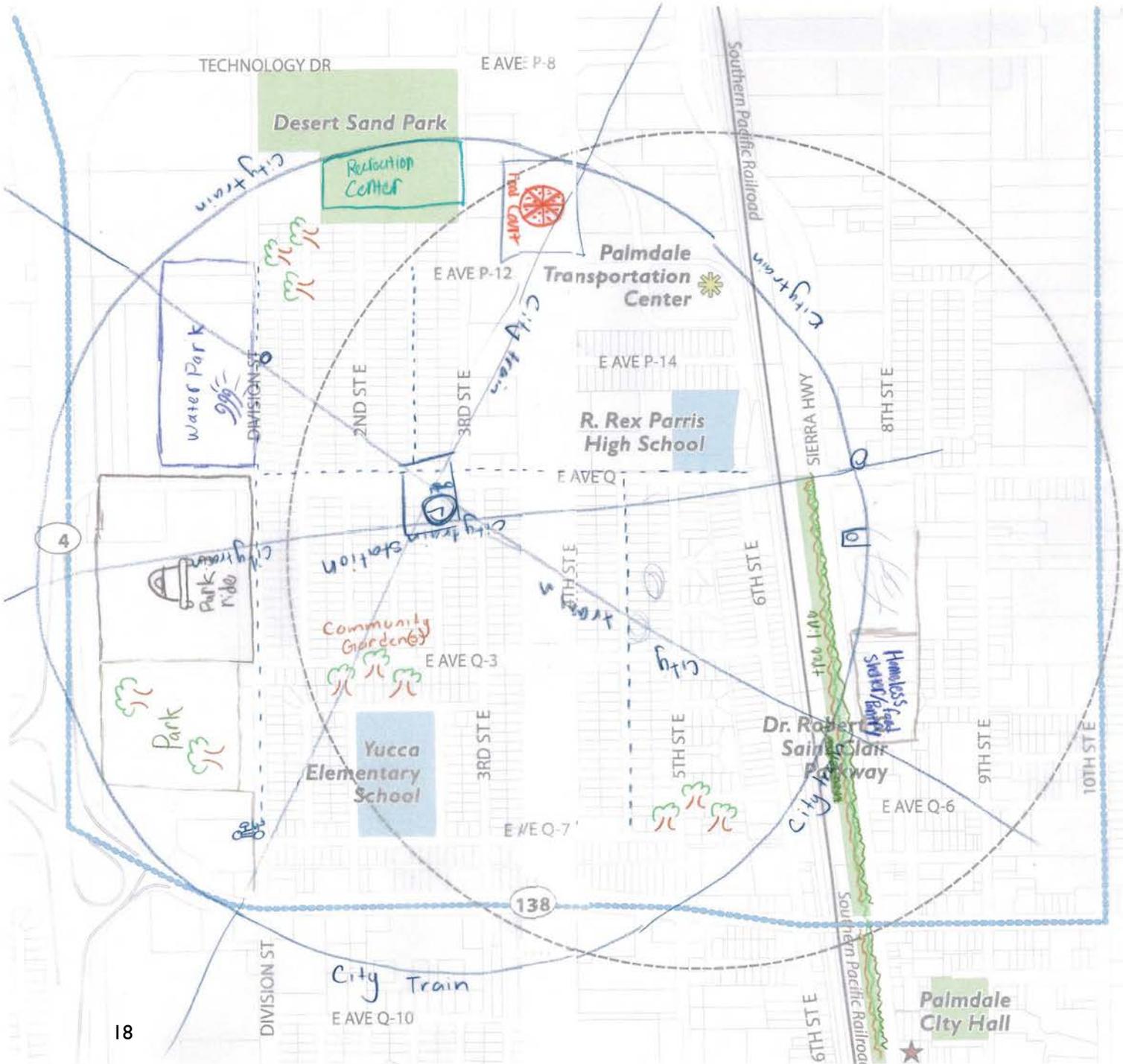
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Appendix C:

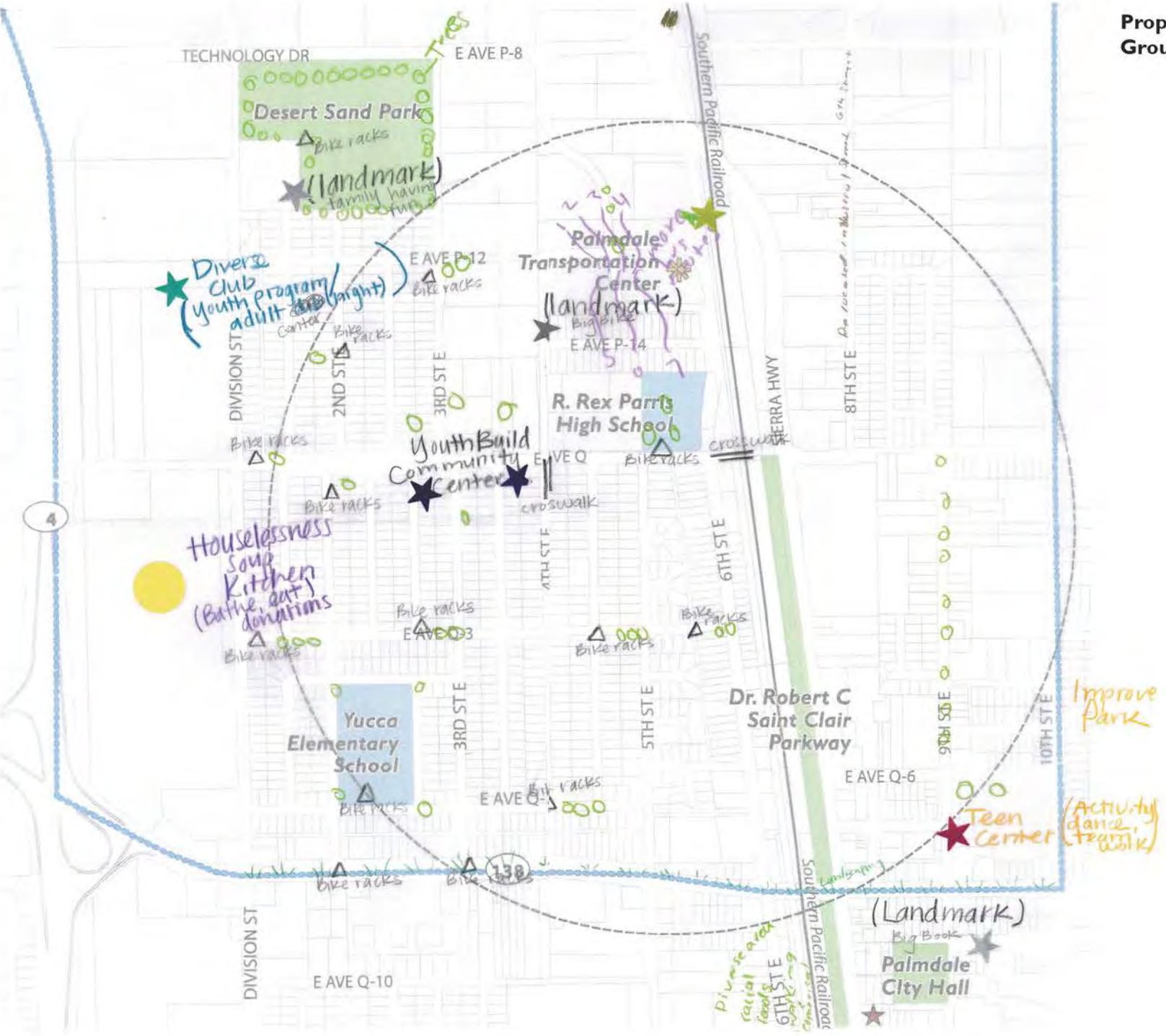
Proposal Maps

The following maps were created by participants to illustrate the key ideas presented in their group proposals.

Proposal Map:
Group One



**Proposal Map:
Group Two**



TECHNOLOGY DR

E AVE P-8

Desert Sand Park
Bike racks
(Landmark)
family having fun

Diverse club youth program adult center (bright)

Palmdale Transportation Center
(Landmark)
E AVE P-14

R. Rex Parrs High School

Youth Build Community Center

Houselessness Soup Kitchen (Bath, eat, donations)

Yucca Elementary School

Dr. Robert C Saint Clair Parkway

Teen Center
(activity dance, team work)

(Landmark)
Big Book
Palmdale City Hall

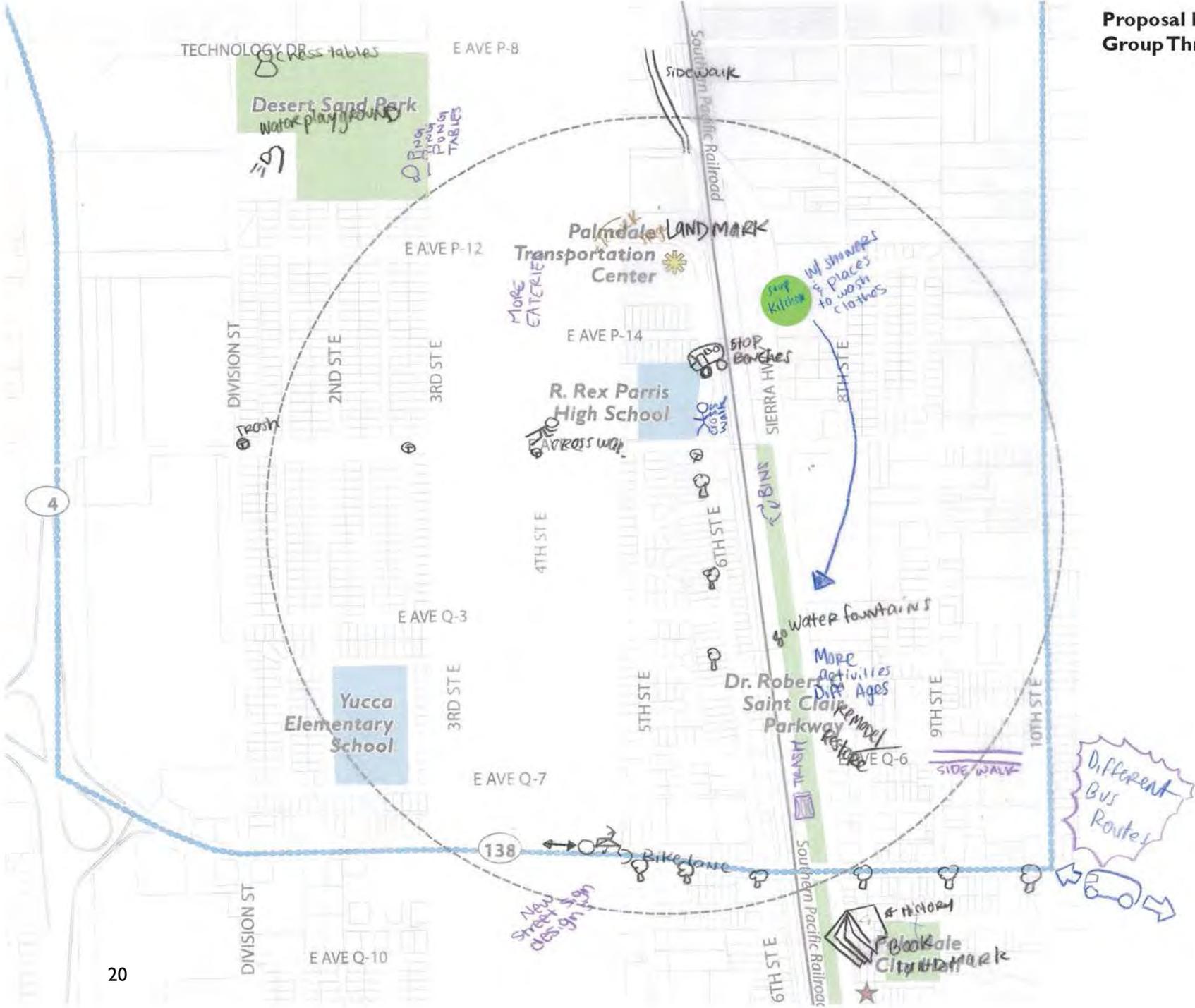
Improve Park

Pivotal area racial favors

4

138

**Proposal Map:
Group Three**



**Proposal Map:
Group Four**



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Appendix D:

Participant Materials

The following materials were used by participants during the Livability Audit:

- TOD Overlay Zone Project and Livability Audit Overview
- Mapping Exercise Note-Taking Sheet
- Mapping Exercise Map
- Mapping Exercise Reflection
- Final Reflection



TOD OVERLAY ZONE PROJECT

Palmdale is in the process of bringing **Transit Oriented Development (TOD)** to the area around the Palmdale Transportation Center. This will make it easier and more enjoyable for people to live, work, go to school and access a variety of transportation options in the area. The objectives of the project are to:

- Create a **TOD Overlay Zone** that encourages higher residential **density** within walking distance of the Palmdale Transportation Center
- Develop a better transportation system that promotes walking, biking and taking public transit
- Promote “complete neighborhoods” that allow people to live, work and play

LIVABILITY AUDIT

Your task is to conduct a **livability** audit that will collect data for the project’s Existing Conditions Report. Your work will help determine how pleasant it is to live, work, visit or go to school in the project’s Focus Area. You will map resources, identify opportunities and constraints, and propose changes to the area.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What is it like to walk around as a pedestrian?
- What public transit and/or bike resources are available to help people get around?
- Are there places that feel unsafe?
- Where are there services, community resources, or opportunities for recreation?
- What special places or landmarks are there?
- Are there signs or other things that help people find where they are going?
- What improvements would you suggest for the area?



KEY TERMS

Transit Oriented Development (TOD): A compact, walkable, mixed-use community within walking distance of a transit stop or station. A TOD brings together people, jobs and services. It is designed in a way that makes it safe and convenient to travel by walking, biking, taking public transit or driving a car.

Overlay Zone: Cities use zoning to decide where different land uses (housing, businesses, industry, etc.) are allowed to go. An overlay zone allows for flexibility in zoning, usually to encourage a specific type of development.

Density: The amount of development within a given area. Areas with high residential density have more homes than areas with low residential density.

Livability: A measurement of how safe, healthy, and comfortable a place feels. A place might be considered “livable” if people feel comfortable getting around and have easy access to services they need and places they enjoy.

Names: _____

Mapping Exercise

As you walk around the Focus Area, work with your partner to use your map and the chart below to record what you see. Mark public transit routes, bike lanes and bike racks using the symbols below:

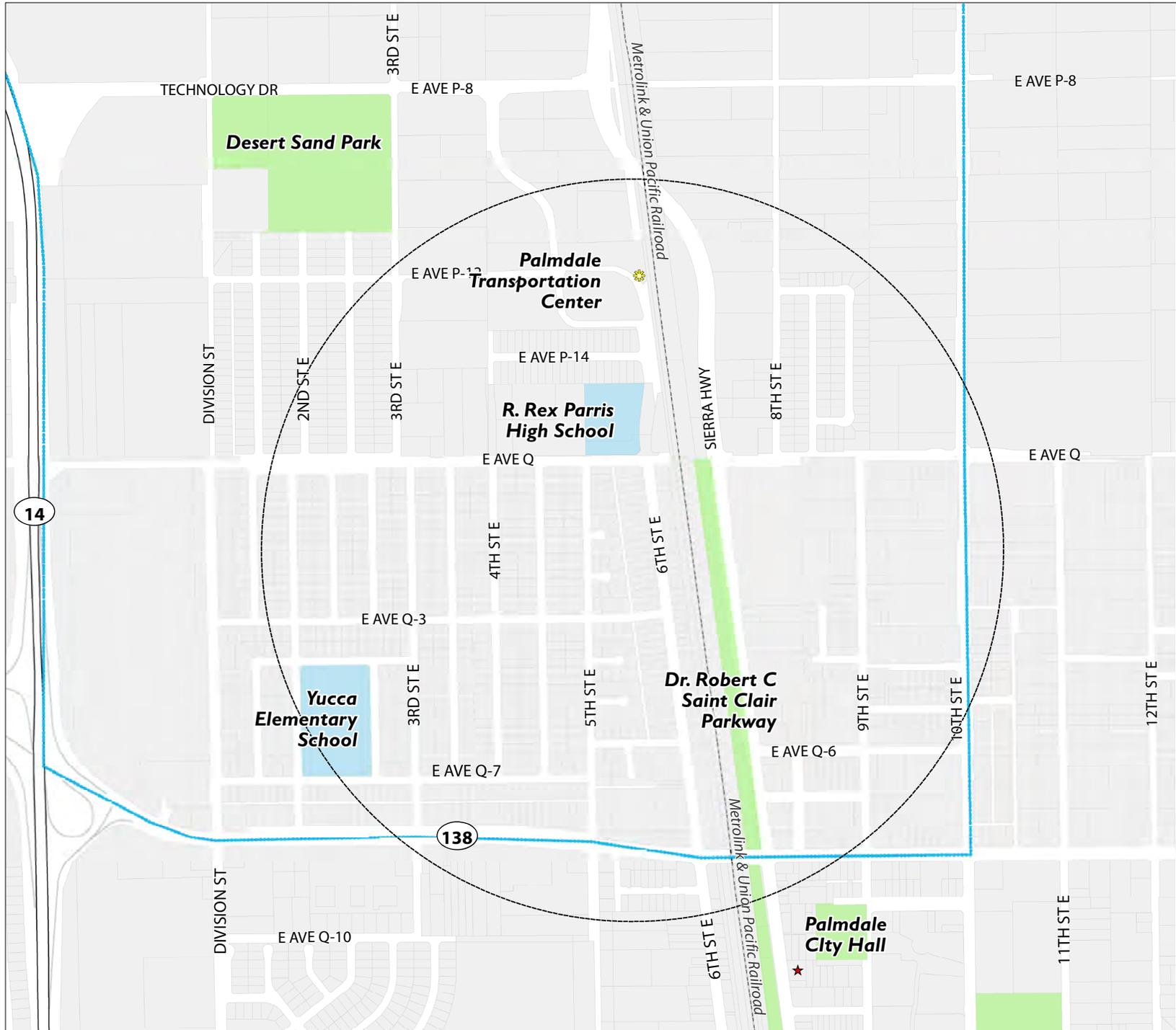
- Public transit routes 
- Bike lanes 
- Bike racks 

For each additional resource you find, mark a number on the map. Then complete the chart below by using the corresponding code from the table and writing a brief description of the resource. If you run out of space, continue your notes on the back of this sheet.

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>
Recreation areas	R	Parks, trails, recreation centers, etc.
Community resources and services	CR/S	Libraries, health clinics, schools, food pantries, etc.
Landmarks	L	Visible, recognizable and significant features
Wayfinding elements/signs	W	Anything that helps orient you or indicate where you are (signage, sightlines, etc.)
Pedestrian amenities/hindrances	P	Beyond sidewalks, note anything significant that helps or hinders the pedestrian experience
Other	O	Anything else you think is important

#	Code	Description/Notes

#	Code	Description/Notes



7. Does the Focus Area have any landmarks (visible, recognizable and significant features that people associate with the area)? If so, what are they?

8. Is there anything else interesting or notable that you saw on our walk around the Focus Area that you'd like to share?

9. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments based on your experience living in the area?

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