

Walnut Council questions Mt. SAC estimates to move parking structure



By [Richard Irwin](#),

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Walnut City Council questioned Mt. SAC's \$14.5 million cost projection to move a controversial 2,200 spot parking structure during a study session Wednesday.

The session was well attended by residents of Timberline, who live across the street from the sprawling campus in Walnut. Homeowners have fought the structure for the past year, saying it will damage the quality of their lives.

The City Council has supported the residents and asked Mt. SAC to come to city hall to explain the other options studied for the parking structure. Mt. SAC President Bill Scroggins sat down to answer their questions.

"Our board asked staff to look at two general alternatives. One would be to move the parking structure to another location, another would be to downsize the parking at the present location," Scroggins explained.

His staff estimated it would cost \$14.5 to move the garage or \$6 million to downsize it.

Councilman Tony Cartagena asked for more information than the three page handouts brought by Mt. SAC.

"Without that information, we cannot say whether this is accurate or not. Because the next step, we would like our city engineer check the other information you might have and figure out if the estimate could be cut," Cartagena said.

Mayor Pro Tem Eric Ching asked how much time had been spent on the analysis. Scroggins said his staff began working on it in mid-December and took a month of preparation.

"One of the major factors is that we're toward the end of the process of the development of the site — the architectural plans, state approval and site preparation," said Scroggins.

To move the structure, he said the community college would have to start from scratch, delaying it by three years.

The Mt. SAC CEO added any delay would add 4 percent a year to construction costs due to inflation. Councilman Bob Pacheco questioned this inflation rate, feeling it should be closer to 3 percent.

Councilwoman Mary Su complained that the city hadn't be informed about the five story parking structure.

“Education is always our number one priority for the community, but this parking structure is too close to residents,” Su said.

Mayor Nancy Tragarz turned the floor over to Walnut residents.

“The one and only meeting was held for the community in April, when we expressed our big disappointment with the location and requested it be moved to the south side of campus,” said Layla Abu Taleb. “Since then there’s been no dialogue with Mt. SAC ... now you’re saying the eight months you stalled looking into our requests is going to be additional money for you. It could be, but I think that’s the price that Mt. SAC will have to pay for lack of communication with the surrounding community.”

Taleb said a parking garage would create traffic congestion and poor air quality, as well as other environmental health risks.

Resident Linda Hiti said the original environmental impact report was based on a three-story structure, then enlarged to a five-story while applying the same EIR.

“That is not comparing apples to apples. Nor did the EIR take into account the safety of the Timberline residents in case of a disaster and evacuation of residents and students,” Hiti said.

Resident Mansfield Collins asked if the college considered downsizing the parking structure if moved to another lot.

“One of the factors is the current need for parking and the need over the immediate future. We’ve done a parking analysis and we’re going to need those parking spaces to serve the Mt. SAC district,” Scroggins said.





