

# Walnut forming new task force to study Mt. SAC projects

SAN GABRIEL VALLEY **TRIBUNE**



An artist's rendering shows what the five-story parking structure will look like that is being proposed for Mt. SAC near Mountaineer Road in Walnut. (Image courtesy of Mt. SAC)

By [Richard Irwin](#), San Gabriel Valley Tribune

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Walnut officials hope to find 10 residents who can serve on a task force to study development at Mount San Antonio College.

The advisory board comes on the heels of the city decision Thursday to sue the community college over a planned \$48.5 million parking structure.

Residents of the Timberline neighborhood also filed a lawsuit to stop the five-story garage that will have space for 2,200 vehicles only 150 feet from their homes. The college has already started to demolish an old parking lot to make way for the new parking structure.

The Mt. SAC Development Task Force will look at future projects such as a \$62 million renovation of Hilmer Lodge Stadium. The football stadium is slated for construction this summer, with Mt. SAC hoping to host the U.S. Olympic track and field trials in 2020.

The citizen advisers will also study proposals for a 13,500-square-foot food court with seating for 290 people and a 10,000-square foot fire academy with its own training tower. A new solar-power generation system will also be scrutinized by the task force.

Last week, city council debated the merits of a five- or 10-member task force.

“I think five is too small, we had 15 on the NFL stadium project,” said Mayor Nancy Tragarz. “We should open it (task force) to a larger representation.”

Fellow council members agreed that a larger body would let every area of the city have a voice.

“This is a problem for the entire city, not just the people living in that area,” agreed Councilman Bob Pacheco.

Pacheco also questioned the wisdom of having council represented on the task force. Council considered having two of its members on the advisory board.

Resident Layla Abou-Taleb thought it was “imperative” to have a council member on the task force.

“What Mt. SAC is doing is trying to create a divide between the residents and elected officials,” Abou-Taleb said. “We all need to work together.”

Pacheco asked if having two council members on the task force would create legal difficulties?

Walnut City Attorney Mike Montgomery replied, “If litigation occurs, then the first thing the other side is going to do is try to disqualify one or two council members for have a preconceived position.”

In the end, the council approved a new task force with 10 members and no council members.

Residents are asked to apply by April 9. Residents may find an application on the city web site at [www.ci.walnut.ca.us](http://www.ci.walnut.ca.us) or at city hall on La Puente Road. Applicants will be interviewed by Mayor Tragarz and Councilwoman Mary Su.

“We’re looking for individuals willing to put in many hours to protect our quality of life. This could take many meetings,” Su said.