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Motorists travel past a section of Telegraph Road east of Norwalk Boulevard in Santa Fe Springs. (Staff Photo by Keith Durlinger)

Telegraph Road key to civic vision

Santa Fe Springs spending millions to beautify, develop thoroughfare

By Fiona Williams
Staff Writer

SANTA FE SPRINGS - Where is downtown Santa Fe Springs?

Nowhere yet, according to city officials. But in a plan to redevelop and beautify all of Telegraph Road, officials hope to unify its various sections and give the city's main artery a sense of community.

"Santa Fe Springs doesn't have a classic downtown area, and as a result of that, we don't have a community focus," City Manager Fred Latham said.

On Thursday, the city staff updated the City Council on the Telegraph Corridor Study, which city officials have been developing for the past few months. The study examines the entire length of Telegraph Road in the city from the San Gabriel River (605) Freeway to Carmenita Road. Officials already have allocated \$125,000 to hire a planning consultant and a landscape architect to generate design and landscape concepts for the corridor.

In conjunction with this, the city is spending close to \$2 million on 32 separate capital improvement projects along Telegraph Road that include: repaving Telegraph Road; adding landscaping, lighting and bus shelters; repairing medians and replacing curbs, gutters and signage.

Roughly \$1 million also has been spent on creating landscaped, meandering sidewalks on stretches of Telegraph Road.

The city hopes to complete these projects in the next 18 months in order to attract private development, according to Mayor Louis Gonzalez.

"These kinds of public projects help to draw business to our city," Gonzalez said. "It's a big investment ... but we think we'll get all of it back in the long run as businesses come in and we increase our tax base."

Certain high-profile developments already are taking shape. Gateway Plaza, a shopping center taking the place of the Santa Fe Springs Mall, is being built on the eastern edge of the corridor.

Farther west, at the intersection of Bloomfield Avenue and Telegraph Road, are fields of operating oil pumps that city officials believe are eyesores. Breitburn Energy Co. is planning to build seven industrial buildings amid 15 working oil pumps on the northeast corner of the intersection. The 20-acre development will include a fountain and a pedestrian walkway in front, according to city officials.

Within the next five years, city officials will consider how to develop the 240 acres of oil fields west of Bloomfield Avenue on Telegraph Road, Latham said.

Krikorian Development Co. has plans to build an office, restaurant and retail complex next to the city's sculpture garden at the southwest corner of Telegraph Road and Norwalk Boulevard. The concrete pedestrian bridge, sweeping over the intersection, will bisect the development, Latham said.

City officials hope to connect these disparate developments with the Civic Center and the Promenade shopping

center, on the western edge of Telegraph, to create a sense of unity within the city.

"We want to do it in a way that creates a sense of consistency along the corridor," Latham said. "It's an opportunity for us to define what we look like for the next 50 years."

Officials will examine everything from whether a future business or commercial park could feature residential lofts to what the bus shelters should look like. The Chamber of Commerce, city committees and community groups will be asked to share input on the project, Latham said.

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