

E. Palo Alto group to rally for housing

By Erin Sherbert

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EAST PALO ALTO — Residents are asking city officials to make it a priority to bring in a full-service supermarket and allocate millions of dollars toward affordable housing.

On Thursday, about 200 residents are expected to rally at the Faith Baptist Church asking Vice Mayor Pat Foster and Councilmember Sharifa Wilson to start meeting with qualified supermarket operators in the next month. In addition, they plan to ask them to allocate \$2 million annually to create more affordable housing.

The rally, being organized by Peninsula Interfaith Action, will start at 6:45 p.m. on Thursday. Local organizing committees of Faith Baptist and St. Francis of Assisi churches will also be a part of

the rally.

"Unless we urge them to do all of this, (the supermarket) will be on the back burner," said Marve Monje, a member of PIA. "We want a supermarket before other projects are brought into the area that won't meet residents' needs."

Although members of the group said they are not going to suggest a specific location for a supermarket, they will ask that the city's Redevelopment Agency publicly present feasible sites in the next three months.

City Mayor Duane Bay said although he recognizes the desire for a full-service supermarket, there are many hurdles the city must clear to bring one into the community.

"We need a site well-situated, of adequate size, and the city doesn't have one," Bay said. "There is also a gap between what supermarket oper-

ators are willing to pay and the land value.

"The city is eager for all of it to come together, but it's going to take more than exhortation," Bay added.

Although the city was one of only two in San Mateo County to meet the affordable-housing element requirements, in which it identified feasible sites for about 1,300 units, the group plans to rally officials for more money and more sites.

One way to alleviate the affordable-housing crisis, Monje said, is if the city allocates hotel tax revenues for such housing.

Bay agreed that affordable housing is a definite need in the city, but said East Palo Alto is two years away from building the first hotel.