

WHITTIER DAILY NEWS

Firm seeks drilling permit

Oil, gas deal could net city \$5M a year

By Mike Sprague Staff Writer

WHITTIER — It's official. Matrix Oil Corp. of Santa Barbara has filed for permission with the city to drill for oil in the Whittier Hills.

And its application for a conditional-use permit indicates if

successful, the drilling could be lucrative for the city.

Matrix says it's possible as much as 10,400 barrels of oil could be produced per day. In addition, natural gas production could reach 6 million cubic feet per day.

While city and Matrix offi-

cials say those numbers probably are on the high side, there are estimates the city could receive as much as \$5 million annually.

Still, before Whittier receives any money, a conditional-use permit must be granted.

But this is a significant step, Mayor Bob Henderson said.

"This will lay out just how they expect to do their operations," Henderson said. "Now we can really analyze a very specific thing, not just a concept."

With the request for a conditional-use permit, the City Council at its May 12 meeting is expected to hire a firm to prepare an environmental impact report.

That process is expected to take nine to 12 months.

The environmental impact report will help the city determine if oil drilling can be done without substantially affecting the hills and determine any mitigation needed, Henderson said.

Matrix was awarded the pos-

sible rights to drill for oil in the Whittier Hills in October. It then had six months to file an application for a conditional-use permit. The application was filed Friday at City Hall.

The filing includes information on the area, description of the drilling process, estimates of amounts of oil and gas that could be acquired, traffic issues, employment, grading and noise.

It projects that 52 underground wells could be drilled on three sites.

Before that is done, three test wells would be drilled to determine if it makes financial sense to drill for oil.

Access will come from either Catalina Avenue, north of Mar Vista Street, or the Arroyo Pescadero trailhead off of Colima Road.

"We'll try to minimize the use of Catalina," said Mike McCaskey, vice president of Matrix. "What we want to do is come up with a plan to use the

OIL A8

OIL

From A1

Colima entrance and have as little impact on the neighborhood as possible."

Residents on Catalina were split over the use of their street.

"It's what Chevron did," said Peter Kloubucar, who has lived there since 1993, referring to when Chevron Oil Co. drilled for oil in the hills.

Chevron sold the property in the mid-1990s to the city.

But Alicia Duran, a resident on the street since 1985, said she hopes the truck traffic doesn't resume.

"With a lot of trucks, it tears up the street," Duran said. "There's also noise and pollu-

The report projects there will be more than 400 vehicle trips during the test drilling period.

The area also would have to be graded to create a flat surface. More than 50,000 cubic yards of soil is expected to be cut and about 22,170 will be taken away.

All of the wells would be drilled underground.

To mitigate potential noise, a sound wall would be constructed and there also would be an attempt to sound-proof machinery, McCaskey said. The operation also would be kept odors from fouling the area, he said.