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Groundbreaking Ceremony for Verano Apartments

Construction at the 2.7-acre Verano complex completes the southern anchor of D Street and transitions what was formerly a neglected area into an attractive, desirable community complete with a park, road and sidewalk improvements and much-needed affordable housing.

"Three years ago there was nothing here but tumbleweeds and jackrabbits," said Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin, Perris' point man on the project, during Thursday's (April 24) ground-breaking.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch addresses the crowd at the April 24 ground-breaking ceremony for the affordable-housing Verano Apartments. Busch: "We continue the revitalization of our Downtown Perris area."

"Now we have a community that we can rightfully be proud of." Located at the intersection of 10th and D streets, the Verano complex represents the second phase of the Mercado District affordable housing project.

Phase 1—the 60-unit \$14-million Mercado Apartments community adjacent to the Verano Apartments--opened in 2012 to rave reviews and a huge waiting list of 1,000 prospective tenants. That was followed by the summer 2013 opening of Mercado Park, which rapidly became the in-place for hundreds of children and parents on hot summer days. Total investment in the three projects: \$30 million. Perris Mayor Daryl Busch said the project went from the drawing board to construction despite the loss of state Redevelopment funding.

The City used funds from its Housing Authority along with private dollars and federal tax credits to pay for the Verano Apartments. Busch said he was concerned that, with the loss of RDA funding, the Verano project would not be completed for years. He thanked City administrators for their tenacity in shrinking that timeline. "We continue the revitalization of our Downtown Perris area," Busch said.

"These apartments will provide good housing to some of our neediest residents. We know this project will be successful because the Mercado Apartments have proven so successful." Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers called the Verano and Mercado apartments "gems for the City" and said they fill a pressing need in the City—providing quality and affordable housing. Construction on the Verano complex is slated for completion in fall 2015. "We have a progressive council that looks for ways to provide for all of its residents," Rogers said.



Perris elected officials and administrators toss the ceremonial first shovels of dirt at the ground-breaking of the Verano Apartments complex.

When finished, the apartments will feature architectural elements matching those of the Mercado community, which include corner towers, a breezeway and pedestrian colonnade. The day-care center will be open to the public. Retail space totals 1,900-square feet. Rents for apartments will range from \$430 to \$993 per month, including utilities. AMCAL Multi-Housing and Las Palmas Foundation will serve as developers of the Verano Apartments as they did for the Mercado complex. In addition to the City Housing Authority, other Perris partners include Union Bank, the California Community Reinvestment Corporation and the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee.

Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said Perris officials once again have demonstrated their ability to keep important projects "in the pipeline" through challenging times. "We have what it takes to deliver these important services to the community," Yarbrough said. "The City Council and staff has demonstrated its commitment to the community."

Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez said he was delighted to see the number of units of affordable housing increase. "We continue to provide affordable housing options for our City and we continue our investment in the positive growth of our Downtown area." Perris City Councilman Al Landers said the retail space at Verano will bolster commerce in the Downtown area.



Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez called the ground-ceremony a "great celebration, a great moment for a fantastic project." Perris officials broke ground Thursday on the 40-unit, \$13 million Verano Apartments, a three-story Mediterranean-style project of affordable and quality housing, a day-care center, community room and retail business space. .

He said both phases of Mercado District affordable housing and Mercado Park are "signature" locations in Perris. "We are upgrading our Downtown area in Perris, and that makes sense," he said. Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez called Thursday's ground-breaking ceremony a "great celebration, a great moment for a fantastic project." "For us, what this project is all about is the enjoyment that people will get out of it when it's completed,"

Belmudez told elected and appointed officials, other City administrators and construction partners. "The value of what you're doing will be seen in people enjoying this project."

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