



Perris Press Release

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer
Phone: 951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org

New Downtown Business Group Gets Construction Updates

Perris elected officials and administrators held the first-ever meeting of a new Downtown business group recently, updating shop owners on construction work in progress, listening to their concerns and laying out a mutually beneficial vision for the future.

Perris City Councilman Al Landers, a longtime business owner in the City with an office on historic D Street, led the initial gathering of the Historic Old Downtown Business Association, which drew about a dozen representatives of small merchants and property owners.

Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez also attended the meeting and told merchants they had "the complete support of the City Council," which is committed to ensuring Downtown Perris and D Street thrives.

The City has committed \$5.8 million to the D Street corridor in recent years, improvements that include a new roadway, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, benches, pavers and parking improvements. Work currently is progressing on D Street from Fourth to Sixth streets.

The City also provided grants to more than a dozen D Street merchants to replace their existing exteriors with more historic-looking facades. Perris officials restored the Victorian-era Train Depot, the 100-year-old Bank of Perris building and are working to restore the art deco Perris Theatre. The Mercado Apartments opened last year and a new senior apartment complex, the Perris Station Apartments, is moving rapidly to completion.

The City has resumed its successful Farmers Market with the intention of bringing more shoppers Downtown to increase business in that district. A new interchange at Fourth Street and Interstate 215 improved access to Downtown as well.

Landers said that while Downtown merchants will benefit greatly from the new road and sidewalk improvements, he's concerned some businesses are feeling the effects of road closures and construction equipment and the dust it creates along D Street. He said the City has posted signs informing customers that all D Street shops are open during construction and that Perris will add even more signage. Landers said he also favors other measures to attract new customers—including a street party later this summer to celebrate the end of construction.

"Let's try some sidewalk sales or dollar day sales," Landers said to the business-owner gathering. "But we need your input too. Let's all band together to make Downtown Perris the best it can be. There's strength in numbers. I love my City and I want your businesses to prosper."

The City could also consider creating a Downtown Business Improvement District to target extra resources specifically to D Street and surrounding streets.

Jose Marin, a City Planning Commissioner who owns a real estate business on D Street, said construction means "growing pains" for merchants.

"But once it's done, it will be well-worth the cost," Marin said. "There's a lot of great things happening in Perris. We're survivors. We will get through this."

Most merchants who attended the meeting said they enjoy doing business in Perris but would like to see the City target graffiti, vandalism and vagrancy. City officials said they are considering expanding the number of police patrols, including bicycle patrols, and installing additional security cameras to deter criminal activity.

Luz Gallegos, of the group TODEC, which works to educate and assist immigrants and help them obtain citizenship, said additional security measures would be welcomed by "D Streeters."

"D Street is so beautiful and we love being," Gallegos said. "You have invested so much in this community."

Bernie Foley, commander of American Legion Post 595 on D Street, said the veterans group has made parking spaces available to a nearby beauty salon during construction.

"The improvements will be great when they're done and we're looking forward to that day," Foley said. "In the meantime, we all need to work together and do whatever we can to help each other."

Another merchant, Juan Palos, who owns a D Street restaurant, praised the City for bringing merchants together and looks forward to additional meetings with Perris representatives.

"It's a good thing, it makes a difference," he said.

Palos said his business survived early construction on D Street and will be around to take advantage of the ongoing improvements.

"We're planning to be here for a long time," he said.



Perris City Councilman (seated at left) takes a question during the initial meeting of the Historic Old Downtown Business Association.



Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez and City Councilman Al Landers talk with American Legion Post 595 Commander Bernie Foley, who says he looking forward to the improvements currently in work along D Street.



Construction along D Street includes new street work, sidewalks and landscaping.



Signs inform people that all D Street businesses remain open during construction.