



Perris Press Release

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

Perris Wins Neighborhood Planning Award

A long-range planning blueprint to remake Perris' historic Downtown Area was honored last week by the American Planning Association during an awards ceremony in Redlands.

The Inland Empire Section of the APA presented Perris Planning Manager Clara Miramontes with the agency's 2012 "Neighborhood Planning Award" for the City's Downtown Specific Plan.

The plan, first adopted in 1993, is designed to create a Downtown that is pedestrian friendly, encompasses mixed-use development that includes commercial, office and residential projects and open spaces while preserving the area's historical integrity.

"It's really a vision plan to revitalize Downtown," said Perris Planning Manager Clara Miramontes. "It's a great planning tool, a living and breathing and innovative document that sets out our vision for Downtown. It's a great honor to receive this award and we are very grateful."

The plan was updated in 2008 after the City held several public hearings that included participation from business owners, residents, civic organizations and property owners. Several elements of the plan have already been completed or are underway, including new facades along several historic buildings on D Street and new sidewalks, lighting, landscaping and street improvements along that historic corridor.

Other elements of the Downtown Specific Plan include the restoration of the Bank of Perris and the Depot Building, the arrival of businesses like Rio Ranch Market, the ongoing construction of the mixed-use Perris Station Apartments and the anticipation next year of Metrolink service to the already-completed multi-modal transit center. A program to strengthen unreinforced masonry buildings also is part of the plan.

Perris
Planning



The Perris team who attended the 2012 American Planning Association awards ceremony: City Clerk Judy Haughney, Housing Manager Sabrina Chavez, Contract Planner Kenneth Phung, City Manager Richard Belmudez, Planning Manager Clara Miramontes, Planning Commissioner Dave Stuary, Assistant Planner Ilene Paik and Planning Commissioner Dwayne Hammond.

Commissioner Dwayne Hammond said creating a forward-thinking plan while maintaining a commitment to preserving City history requires "foresight, diligence and caring." Many cities in Southern California have torn down their historic structures to make way for residential and commercial developments only to regret that choice later.

"Once you tear things down, it's gone forever," Hammond said. "A lot of cities would like to have a Downtown like Perris does but they don't. If you don't respect your past, you have no idea where your roots lie." Perris officials said they were particularly pleased to receive this year's award because it continues the legacy of former

Planning Manager Brad Eckhardt, who was passionate about creating a viable, sustainable community.

Under his leadership, the City was honored for its commitment to "green" technology, for preserving the Bank of Perris, Train Depot and implementing the D Street façade program that returned many buildings to their historical appearance. Eckhardt was killed in a traffic accident in 2010 but his legacy lives on in projects like the Downtown Specific Plan, which he played a leading role in creating and implementing.

Following his death, the City created the Bradley R. Eckhardt Memorial Scholarship as a way to honor his "outstanding dedication and achievement in the planning profession." The scholarship is presented annually to a university student who is studying planning. This year's recipient is Linda My Huynh.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch remembered Eckhardt when congratulating the staff for taking home the 2012 Neighborhood Planning Award.

"Brad Eckhardt was a key member of our planning staff," Busch said. "He worked on the Downtown Specific Plan, so winning this award makes it very special. We are happy and pleased to receive it."

In addition to Miramontes and Hammond, the Perris City staff who attended the APA awards ceremony included City Manager Richard Belmudez, City Clerk Judy Haughney, Assistant Director of Development Services Rene Avila, Housing Manager Sabrina Chavez, Planning Commissioner Dave Stuart, Assistant Planner Ilene Paik and Contract Planner Kenneth Phung.



Perris Planning Manager Clara Miramontes accepts the Neighborhood Planning Award from the American Planning Association during a ceremony in Redlands.



A close-up of the award presented to the City of Perris for its Downtown Specific Plan.