



Perris Press Release

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Mercado Apartments are a Model for Moderate-Income Housing

Perris' recently opened Mercado Apartments took front and center during a recent visit by more than a dozen San Bernardino County elected officials and municipal administrators seeking to expand affordable housing in their communities.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and City Manager Richard Belmudez led the tour through the \$16-million, 60-unit low and moderate-income complex that opened in June and was fully occupied at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Funding for the Mercado Apartments came from the City's former redevelopment agency and from loans taken out by Perris' partner on the project, the Agoura Hills-based AMCAL Multi-Housing and Las Palmas Foundation.

Perris officials touted the complex at the south end of D Street as an anchor that will spur revitalization along the historic corridor. Work on another apartment complex—this one the senior-citizen Perris Station Apartments—is progressing well and will open next year on the north end of D Street. In addition, numerous buildings along D Street have been renovated and returned to their historic appearances.

Funding for the Mercado Apartments came from the City's former redevelopment agency and from loans taken out by Perris' partner on the project, the Agoura Hills-based AMCAL Multi-Housing and Las Palmas Foundation. Despite the loss of the RDA, Perris officials remain committed to completing Phase II of the Mercado complex in the future.

"This is a great project and something we are very proud to have done for our residents," Busch said as he began the tour. "When you see the apartments, you are going to say 'wow.' We are very pleased to show it off. This project is all we hoped for and more."

Visitors included San Bernardino County Supervisor Josie Gonzales, Colton Mayor Sarah Zamora, City Manager Rod Foster, economic development specialists and law enforcement officials. Colton and San Bernardino County officials want to expand affordable housing for their low and moderate-income residents.

The group toured the lobby and individual apartments, meeting with designers, architects, property managers and tenants. Gonzales and Zamora came away impressed. Gonzales said she was particularly pleased with the personal touches found at Mercado. Each apartment has its own balcony. There is a swimming pool, tot lot, barbecue pit in the outdoor common area. The inside entertainment center boasts theatre seating and space for tutoring classes and English as a second language. It's all about sewing Mercado residents into the fabric of the Perris community. Gonzales said Mercado "feels like home."

"It's not like living in a box," she said. "The whole look and feel is very inviting. It gives the tenants that home feeling. If I lived here, I would feel very fortunate. I'm ready to move in myself. You are doing a really great job."

Zamora said she was impressed that the City of Perris, in keeping with its commitment to sustainable development, installed solar panels at Mercado to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. She also was impressed with the open spaces within the complex.

"It looks like Perris really put its heart into this community," Zamora said. "They've considered all the needs and necessities of the residents."

The Mercado Apartments features one, two and three-bedroom units ranging from 849 to 1,115-square feet. Because they are considered affordable housing, rents generally are below market value, ranging from \$422 to \$829 per month.

To get an apartment, potential tenants underwent background checks and were even visited in their previous residences by Mercado representatives. City officials and apartment managers make it plain that any sort of criminal or unruly behavior will lead to eviction. Cameras monitor activities outside the complex and a Neighborhood Watch group has been established on-site. Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez said police have reported no problems.

Despite the strict standards, the entire complex filled within 44 days of accepting applicants. The current wait list is close to 1,000.

Ana Cabrales, 36, and her family were among the lucky few who qualified for Mercado living. She and her husband, Ramon, and children, Esli, 11, and Jonathan, 3, used to live in a trailer on a farm without heating or air conditioning. Summers were brutally hot, winter bone-chilling. Chickens and cows wandered about. Ramon Cabrales works in a cosmetics laboratory but the family's income would not allow them a better home.

When they heard that Mercado managers were accepting tenant applications, the family jumped at the chance. They persisted even after learning hundreds of other people were vying for the available apartments. Ana Cabrales said she was overjoyed to learn the family's application for a two-bedroom apartment was accepted.

"I love the apartment," she said. "I love the kitchen. We are very thankful to be here and very thankful to the City of Perris for providing quality housing for people who are less fortunate."

Colton City Manager Rod Foster said Perris deserves high praise for bringing to reality a first-class housing project.

"Perris residents should be very proud of the leadership they are receiving from City Hall," Foster said.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and San Bernardino County Supervisor Josie Gonzales discuss the Mercado Apartments during a recent visit from a group of dignitaries from San Bernardino and Colton.



Colton Mayor Sarah Zamora chats with Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, who gave a tour of the Mercado Apartments. Zamora's reaction: "It looks like Perris put its heart into this community."



Mercado Apartment resident Ana Cabrales, 36, with San Bernardino County Supervisor Josie Gonzales. Cabrales and her family love living in the Mercado Apartments.



The Mercado Apartments reflect the California Mission style common in Perris.



The 60-unit Mercado Apartments currently has a two-year waiting list.