



Perris News

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Facade Program Puts a New Face on D St. Businesses

The City's Commercial Façade Improvement Program is remaking historical D Street.

Since the program kicked off last year, two businesses have already completed major renovations, three more are undergoing rehabilitation and several more could begin transformations in the next 90 days.

The \$900,000 program, which is administered through the City's Redevelopment Agency, makes up to \$30,000 in grants available to interested businesses that want to upgrade and update their exteriors. The idea is improve as many as 16 shops, markets and restaurants and in the process turn D Street into an eclectic business district that attracts visitors and Perris residents while restoring the historical look of many historic buildings.

"The City of Perris has always had a great story to tell and now we are telling it," said City Councilman Al Landers.

"By renovating the facades of our historic shopping and commercial district, we are better able to tell the story of Perris, which will celebrate its centennial in 2011. The buildings that are included in the program are historic landmarks that must be preserved. I am pleased and proud to be part of this effort."

Dad's Auto at Third and D became the first business to apply for grant aid and the first to complete renovations. The upgrades include a new LED-lighted sign, new paint job, upgrades to the parking area, new windows and a more customer-friendly waiting area.

Co-owner Mike Sides said he's already received positive comments. The new sign really stands out at night, drawing attention to the shop.

"People are driving by and noticing us for the first time in years," he said. "We stand out. I'm really glad the City is doing so much to help Downtown businesses. It's appealing and it will bring more people Downtown."

Work finished last week on the TODEC Legal Center.

The immigrant-rights advocacy group works to help make immigrants economically, socially, educationally, and civically self-sufficient while enhancing individual self-esteem. The new façade has made a dramatic change to the way the building looks, said Redevelopment Project Coordinator Veronica Arana.

Arana said work is ongoing at the Underground Barber Shop and Michelle's Beauty Parlor at Third and D streets. That construction is slated for completion by Jan. 19.

Work also continues at the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars meeting posts, both at Sixth and D streets. American Legion Post 595 Commander Bernie Foley says improvements include new paint, landscaping, doors and stonework. Graffiti also was removed from a mural at the Legion Hall.

"It's a great big facelift," said Foley, a Korean War veteran. "We are happy to see the City improve this area. We think it's a great thing. It will be a real boon to this entire end of the City. We hope it will bring more people in and make us stand out."

Work at the Legion and VFW posts should be done within 30 days.

City Council member Joanne Evans, a member of Legion Post 595, said the veterans group could never have afforded the upgrades without help from Perris.

"It's going to make the whole street look cleaner, newer, nice and more inviting," she said. "The whole Commercial Façade Improvement Program has been absolutely phenomenal. People are going to come to Perris and say this is really a nice City."

Mayor Daryl Busch said D Street improvements are part of an ongoing and larger effort that includes improvements to roads and streets leading into Downtown. Work is expected to begin on the redesign of the Interstate 215 at Fourth Street in the next few months. The City has also finished renovations on the 1918 Bank of Perris building, which is not part of the façade improvement program but will also attract attention to the Downtown Area.

"We are committed to these efforts and I am pleased to see progress is being made," Busch said.

City Councilman Mark Yarbrough predicted that when D Street façade work is completed, the district will become a lure for visitors and commerce.

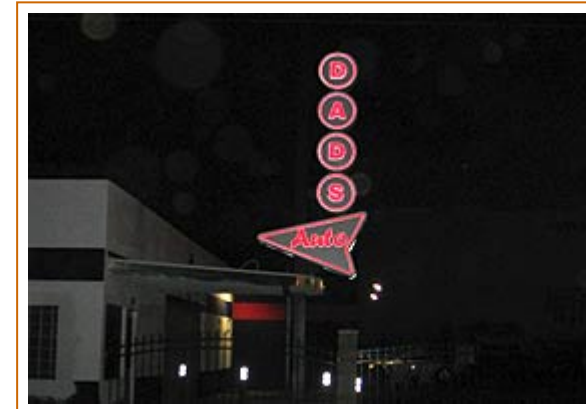
"We have a real, historical avenue with real structures built decades ago," he said. "Other cities would give anything to have the history we do. This program will restore and renovate the historical integrity to some of our most historic buildings. It is a great program."

Arana, the City redevelopment coordinator, said the long-range plan for D Street will do nothing less than remake the district.

"The changes will be dramatic," she said. "It's going to reshape the area."



Dad's Auto before the transition.



Dad's Auto at night with its new sign.



Todec Legal Center before its transition.



Todec with its new façade.



American Legion Post 595 commander Bernie Foley talks about the ongoing façade work at the D Street location.