



Perris News

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Perris Programs Attract Students from Germany

Thirty German graduate students came to Perris to learn first-hand about the City's response to the mortgage and foreclosure crises and the programs implemented by elected officials and staff to stabilize housing prices.

The students, from the University of Frankfurt and the University of Mainz, heard from City Councilman Al Landers about Perris' Homebuyers Assistance Program, Substantial Rehabilitation Program and Foreclosure Homeownership Program, all designed to get and keep deserving families into decent and affordable housing. The programs are credited with removing more than 200 homes from foreclosure rolls in the last year.

The students quizzed Landers for more than an hour, seeking specifics about the programs and their impact on the community. Landers answered all their questions, relying on his expertise from more than 20 years as a realtor in the Perris Valley to provide the necessary details.

The councilman also presented the students and their two instructors with a proclamation declaring April 2 as "Recognition and Appreciation Day" for the visitors. He also presented them with keys to the City and City pins.

"I am so grateful to see you in the City to learn about how we confronted a crisis which we did not create but were forced to deal with," Landers told the students and professors who sat in the City Council chambers. "It's an honor to see you here and to tell you about the programs we implemented to turn this situation around and improve the lives of all Perris residents."

The graduate students, who are studying economic geography, are visiting Southern California to learn about other pressing issues, including water use and immigration. The large-group visit followed an earlier trip to Perris by five students who interviewed Mayor Daryl Busch, Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin and Associate Planner Sabrina Chavez, the staff person charged with making the housing programs work. She explained that the Homebuyers Assistance Program offers up to \$25,000 to income-eligible families needing down payment assistance on their home.

The Substantial Rehabilitation Program offers up to \$50,000 for homeowners wanting to make major improvements to their homes. Under the Foreclosure Homeownership Program, the City purchases distressed homes, rehabilitates them and then sells them to qualified families.

All three programs have gained national and international prominence from U.S. and foreign media in the last 12 months.

The highlight of the small-group visit took place when Mayor Busch gave the students a guided tour of the City Hall Campus. He posed with photos of the students in the Council chambers. He also explained how Perris officials shun fancy accommodations but still manage to perform their duties and keep the City moving forward.

"We have no office, no desk and no secretary," he said. "We have a laptop and a cell phone. That's all it takes." Students and professors said they were overwhelmed by the kindness and courtesy of the Perris elected officials and staff.

"We didn't expect Perris to be so kind to us," said student Jonas Rabe. "We got some great insights into the City's policies, which are unique. We are honestly surprised that the City takes care about its residents so much. You showed perfectly how a city can manage a major crisis."

Graduate student Angelika Tolle called the trip to Perris "very nice and very pleasant."

"We learned more than I thought we would," she said. "It was very cool that you invited our group to spend time here. It was fantastic."

Professor Christian Berndt, who along with colleague Marc Boekler, led the students on trip to the U.S., thanked Perris officials for rolling out the red carpet. He especially thanked Landers, who spent much of Good Friday entertaining and informing the students.



Mayor Daryl Busch welcomed five graduate students and gave them a VIP tour of the City campus.



Perris City Councilman Al Landers discusses the City's housing programs with German graduate students Daniel Dellemann, Christianne Tristl, Angelika Tolle and Jonas Rabe.



Councilman Al Landers makes a point with German professor Christian Berndt.