



Perris News

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Perris Garners Awards for Planning

The City of Perris keeps racking up planning awards.

The latest kudo for Perris planners came this month when the City received awards for its Commercial Façade Improvement Program, its restoration of the Bank of Perris and Train Depot and for its continued excellence in developing a sustainable community.

"These are major awards and I am very pleased that our planning experts have received the recognition they so richly deserve," said City Councilman Al Landers. "But I cannot say that I am surprised. I am continually impressed with the work of all our staff. I say keep up the good work and congratulations!"

City Councilwoman Rita Rogers called the awards recognition "a fine moment for our City."

"It just goes to show that we have a great team that is helping Perris gain honor and prestige in the Inland Empire and surrounding region."

A team of City officials led by Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin, Redevelopment and Economic Development Manager Michael McDermott, Planning Manager Brad Eckhardt, Assistant Director of Development Services Rene Avila and City Clerk Judy Haughney accepted the awards at a ceremony in Riverside.

Perris received a Planning Landmark Award for restoring the Bank of Perris Building and the Depot Building. The Bank will be used to store City archive, documents and historic photographs. The Depot hosts the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association's local history museum.

The City took honors in the Planning Project Award for its Downtown Commercial Façade Program, which will remake the face of historic D Street. The program provides grants to restore an early 20th Century look to the exteriors of D Street businesses and has already received praise for renovating that historic business district.

Perris has spent years developing its "green," or sustainable, community model. All the awards were presented on behalf of the Inland Empire Section of the American Planning Association.

The City was awarded the prestigious Helen Putnam Award in 2008 for installing solar panels throughout the City Hall Campus. Last year, Perris officials worked with the Toro Company on a state-of-the-art irrigation system at City Hall. City officials have planted trees at Perris parks and schools.

Sustainable practices in the City of Perris have been the norm for over five years, Madkin said

In just the past two years, Perris has initiated several new programs to preserve residential neighborhoods. The green elements of these City programs reflect fundamental policies of the Sustainable Community Plan, including a core tenet of sustainable practice that encourages the retrofit and reuse of existing buildings to avoid urban sprawl and the unnecessary use of green fields.

Six programs are currently offered by the City of Perris to target at-risk neighborhoods and improve the quality of life for residents. In addition, a highly innovative foreclosure program seeks to avert the decline of entire neighborhoods. Low cost loans, loan forgiveness and grant opportunities from \$5,000 to \$50,000 are provided to eligible Perris residents (low, low to moderate income) to purchase, repair and upgrade single family homes to energy and water conserving efficiency.

The newest programs, in place for slightly more than a year, emphasize energy conservation and the subsequent cost savings. The Green Light Saving Program provides \$5,000 grants for a variety of sustainable upgrades in homes from CFL light bulbs to low flow plumbing fixtures, weatherization and energy-efficient water heaters. The Substantial Rehabilitation Program (SRP) encourages eligible homeowners of substandard, deteriorating properties to apply for a deferred loan of up to \$50,000 at a 2 percent simple interest rate. The Homeowner Assistance Program (HAP) provides a zero percent no-payment loan to qualified first time homebuyers as down payment or closing cost assistance when purchasing a home, including City-owned retrofitted foreclosed homes. The "Golden" Program provides referrals to senior citizens for energy and water efficiency retrofits to their homes, and beyond (health, transportation and utility assistance).

The two oldest programs, the Senior Home Repair and Residential Beautification were not conceived with sustainability in mind three years ago. However, the list of eligible repairs and improvements has become significantly more green and comprehensive in the recent past. As an example, the aesthetic improvements possible under the Residential Beautification Program include water-conserving landscaping. These retrofits and energy efficiency improvements to existing homes preserve housing stock and the quality of older neighborhoods through incentives for repair, retrofits and beautification.

Finally, in response to the high number of foreclosures, Perris in early 2009 developed the innovative and comprehensive Foreclosure Acquisition Program (FAP). This program averts the harmful impact of foreclosures on neighborhoods by registering foreclosed homes, requiring banks to maintain their foreclosed homes, or the City will take immediate action, and in targeted neighborhoods, the City purchases foreclosed, distressed homes.

These homes are repaired and retrofitted with Energy Star appliances, low water use plumbing fixtures, weatherproofing, upgraded insulation and windows, and new water conserving landscaping.

The Homebuyer's Assistance Program is also available to help first time homebuyers buy these homes. Through these actions the City of Perris has revitalized neighborhoods, helped citizens buy their first home, assisted seniors to stay independent and in their homes, and turned the foreclosure crisis into an opportunity, all the while greening the community.

City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said Perris leads the Inland Empire and indeed most of California in its commitment to "going green."

"This is another feather in our cap," he said.



Michael McDermott, the City's Redevelopment and Economic Development Manager, and Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin accept awards for Perris' efforts to restore and revitalize the community's historic buildings and expand the commitment to "going green."



Planning Commissioner Dave Stuart and Assistant Director of Development Services Rene Avila at the podium.



Associate Planner Diane Sbardellati, the City's leading expert for green development, looks on as Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin accepts an award presented by the Inland Empire Section of the American Planning Association.