



## Perris News

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### Perris Planning Manager Fatally Injured in Motorcycle Accident

Perris Planning Manager Brad Eckhardt, whose work is credited with remaking the City's historical and business districts, was killed July 4th when he lost control of his motorcycle and was struck by an oncoming vehicle while riding in San Diego County.

"Perris is a great City because we have awesome people who are passionate about their work and this community," said City Clerk Judy Haughney, who also serves on the Planning Commission and spent many hours working with Mr. Eckhardt on a wide variety of projects. "Brad loved this City. He wanted Perris to succeed and become the best city in Riverside County, if not all of California. He brought hard work, commitment and passion to his job."

Mr. Eckhardt, 48, was responsible for guiding several major planning and development projects through to completion, including the Downtown Specific Plan, the North Perris Gateway Plan, the Perris Crossing Shopping Center and the Hanes Brands Distribution Center, the largest green building in the world.

He worked on the Perris Valley Commerce Center and the South Perris Industrial Area, both massive projects aimed at bringing commerce and jobs to Perris.

Mr. Eckhardt led the planning team that completed the City's General Plan update, a massive undertaking that laid out the long-term blueprint addressing Perris' needs over the next 20 years, including housing, traffic circulation, noise control and conservation of resources.

The City became just the second community in California to earn approval from the California Department of Housing and Community Development for completing the Housing Element of its General Plan.

"This was massive undertaking and Brad pretty much was in charge of the overview," said Planning Commissioner Dave Stuart.

Under his stewardship, the City redesigned and streamlined its zoning code, making it simpler and more flexible. More recently, Mr. Eckhardt and his staff worked closely with Caltrans to design a new bridge over Highway 74/Fourth Street as part of a new \$25 million interchange at Interstate 215.

In April, he was part of a City contingent that received awards from the American Planning Association for development of Perris' Commercial Façade Improvement Program, its restoration of the Bank of Perris and Train Depot and for its continued excellence in developing a sustainable community. His team also worked on the Perris Town Center, a project expected to break ground later this year and include major shopping retailers, theaters and commercial enterprises.

Mr. Eckhardt was particularly proud of the City's efforts to encourage green development. A highlight of the City's efforts at sustainable development came earlier this year when the 1.3-million-square-foot Hanes Brands Distribution Center earned the distinction as the world's largest green building.

"We are setting the standard for sustainability in the building trades," Mr. Eckhardt said. "We are making the extraordinary commonplace."

Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said Mr. Eckhardt's commitment to excellence should be remembered by all Perris residents.

"Brad Eckhardt was part of our planning team that has taken Perris to the next level," said City Councilman Mark Yarbrough. "His loss is devastating. I keep thinking this is just a bad dream. I am numb right now."

Mr. Eckhardt was fatally injured as he drove his vintage 1969 Yamaha motorcycle on a rural two-lane road east of Fallbrook. The California Highway Patrol said Mr. Eckhardt was driving alone when he somehow lost control of the motorcycle on the winding roadway.

Mr. Eckhardt joined the City of Perris as a contract planner in March 2002.

He was hired as a City employee in September 2004 and became Planning Manager in 2007. His job included supervising all the private development in the City, including residential, commercial, industrial and retail. Mr.

Eckhardt received a Bachelor's Degree in geography from San Francisco State University and a Master's Degree in Urban and Regional Planning from San Jose State University.

Planning Commissioners Stuart and Haughney said Mr. Eckhardt was personable, funny, easy to work with and consistent in establishing planning guidelines. And he deeply cared about the citizens who served on the Planning Commission.

"He was hugely popular and very well liked," Haughney said. "He really cared about people."

Stuart said Mr. Eckhardt sought out opinions of the Commissioners and made them feel part of the planning process. He said Mr. Eckhardt remained low key even during intense discussions with developers and community residents.

"He was unflappable," Stuart said. "No matter how intense things got, Brad remained cool, calm and collected."

Mr. Eckhardt is survived by his wife, Edna; two daughters and a son. Funeral services will take place at 2 p.m. Friday at the England Family Mortuary, 27135 Madison Avenue in Temecula. Cards and expressions of condolences may be sent to the City of Perris, 101 North D Street, Perris, CA 92570. Those will be forward to Mr. Eckhardt's family.

