



Perris News

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Perris Restoration Projects Featured at Regional APA Symposium

It seemed only appropriate that a regional seminar this week focusing on ways to preserve community history take place in the Perris City Council Chambers.

After all, the City restored the 100-year-old former high school, spending several years and \$5 million to convert the former education center into one of its showplaces that is used not only by Perris elected and appointed officials but the public as well.

The City Council Chambers is just one of several historical buildings that Perris has or is restoring to their former grandeur. The City's commitment to preserving and restoring its past was one of the major reasons the Inland Empire Section of the American Planning Association held its Third Annual Historical Symposium in Perris.

Afterwards, the 30 architects, artists, historians, photographers and planners completed a walking tour of the Perris Theatre, the Bank of Perris, the Depot Building and the Southern Hotel.

"We are really proud to show off what we have done and what we are doing," Perris Mayor Daryl Busch said in his remarks to the symposium. "We believe it will serve the community for a long time."

The APA has recognized Perris' commitment to historical preservation and green development, honoring the City with four major awards in the last two years.

The symposium featured artists who helped create public art and preserved history in some way. Fallbrook sculptor Christopher Pardell talked about the fountain he created at Temecula City Hall and its impact on the community. Riverside photographer Michael Elderman discussed his book of photographs detailing the restoration of the historic Fox Theatre.

Perris Planning Commissioner Dave Stuart detailed the renovations at the Train Depot and Bank of Perris buildings. The 1892 Depot, once home to California Southern and Santa Fe railroads, is on the National Registry of Historic Places. The restoration took 10 years and \$1.6 million, which included new floors, a new roof, new stained glass window, seismic retrofitting and handicap accessibility.

The Depot was dedicated last year and now includes a museum that tells the story of the Perris Valley. The 1918 Bank of Perris was refurbished at a cost of \$600,000 and serves as the City's historical document repository.

During the course of the restoration, workers discovered a portion of the original marble floor and the original "Bank of Perris" sign that had been covered with stucco. Renovations included repairing the bank vault, installing new wiring and fixing holes in the roof.

Stuart said the new mission of the Bank building—storing Perris' irreplaceable documents—appeals to the public because it is "history helping history."

Members of the APA contingent who went on the walking tour said they were impressed with the ongoing renovations at the Perris Theatre and the completed restorations of the Depot, Bank and Southern Hotel. They toured the Perris Valley Museum in the Depot Building and a museum to the pioneers of Perris compiled by Sarah Motte, daughter of former Perris City Councilman John Motte.

"This really shows the City is taking pride in the community," said Leisa Lukes, the incoming director of the Inland Empire Section of the APA. "Preserving historic buildings is much cheaper than tearing them down and rebuilding. But it takes a lot of commitment. It's pretty remarkable."

Another visitor, Marion Mitchell-Wilson of the Inlandia Institute, commended Perris staff, administration and elected officials for their commitment to preserving and celebrating the City's past. The Inlandia Institute seeks to promote Riverside and San Bernardino counties through words, images and sounds.

"Everyone is working together," she said, describing the Perris teamwork as collaborative and cooperative.

Associate Planner Diane Sbardellati said the chance to host the historical symposium shows that Perris is garnering attention for its efforts on a regional level. The City has been honored for restoration of the Bank and Depot buildings, implementing a façade improvement program to return D Street businesses to their historic appearance and for taking the lead in "green" or sustainable development.

"It's a big honor," she said. "It shows we're doing everything well." Stuart summed up the long-term vision set forth by Perris officials as he wrapped up the walking tour.

"Brick by brick," he said. "We are improving Perris."



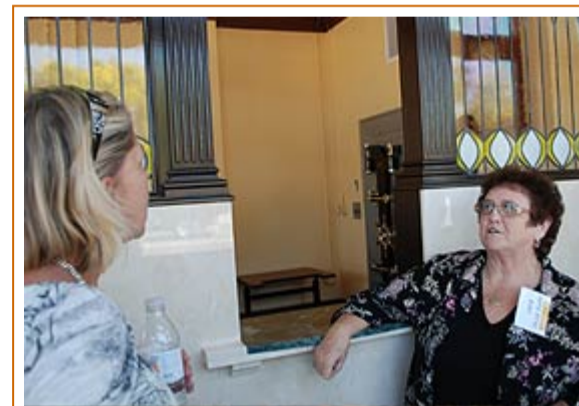
Perris Mayor Daryl Busch addresses the APA symposium in the City Council Chambers. "We're proud of what we've done in Perris."



Perris Planning Commissioner Dave Stuart leads the group on a walking tour of D Street.



Planning Commissioner Dave Stuart and Development Services Combination Inspector Tony Hurley explain ongoing renovations at the Perris Theatre.



Local historian Katie Keyes (right) discusses the newly refurbished Bank of Perris Building with Leisa Lukes.