



Mercado Apartment Project Breaks Ground

Perris City officials broke ground Tuesday on a \$14-million, 60-unit affordable housing complex that will transform the southern end of D Street, bring more people and more commerce Downtown and move forward the renaissance of the main route through the heart of the historic residential and retail district.

"This is an important day for us," City Manager Richard Belmudez told the crowd of about 75 elected representatives and other dignitaries who gathered at the construction site near D and Eighth streets.

"This project completes a major piece of our Downtown puzzle. We are taking a dirt lot and transforming it into a very impressive development. This area of D Street had gotten a little tired but once all the work is completed, it will be the heart and soul of Downtown. This is an important part of our economy and an important part of our investment in the future," he said.

Construction on the Mercado Apartments is expected to begin in late November and should be completed in 12 to 14 months. The first phase includes a three-story complex for income-qualified applicants. Phase II includes a retail center as well as more residential units and a four-acre park.

City officials emphasized their partnership with a private developer, the Agoura Hills-based AMCAL Multi-Housing and Las Palmas Foundation, which helped provide funding for the Mercado Apartments.

Percival Vaz, the company CEO, extolled the efforts of City staff and the City Council for working to move the project forward.

"We are truly grateful to be here today," Vaz said. "This is a dynamic City with dynamic leadership. When this project is completed, it will offer state-of-the-art amenities in a safe and comfortable environment." Perris Mayor Daryl Busch said the City has worked for years to revitalize D Street.

The north end of D Street benefitted from the Perris Gateway Project, which extended from Interstate 215 south to Fourth Street and included new pavers, lighting, benches, trees and landscaping. Work on that portion of D Street also included renovating the art deco Perris Theatre and working with business owners to install new exterior facades on their buildings.

Now the area south of Fourth Street is receiving plenty of tender loving care, the Mayor said.

The 1918 Bank of Perris opened earlier this year as the repository of City archives and the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts also received new facades. Other improvements in the immediate vicinity include the restoration of the 1892 Depot Building, a new interchange at I-215 and Fourth Street and the opening this year of the Perris Transit Center at Second and C streets.

Downtown Perris also is benefiting from the ongoing construction the Big League Dreams sports complex just west of I-215.

"It is a pleasure to stand before you at this fine event," Busch said. "We are proud that we are able to continue with good projects. We are proud to keep the ball moving forward."

Busch said residents made it clear during a series of public workshops they wanted residential housing and development included in renovations along D Street. A planned senior housing complex at D Street and San Jacinto Avenue also is working its way through the development process.

Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley, a Perris resident, predicted the City would be swamped with applications from families eager to call the Mercado Apartments home.

"You will have people fighting to live in this complex," Ashley said. "This makes me proud to live in Perris."

Ashley said further that Perris will benefit from the multi-billion dollar March Life Care campus near March Air Reserve Base, a medical center that will provide neonatal to hospice care. The City will also provide residents to learn dental hygienist and physicians assistant skills at the Ben Clark Training Center. All the ongoing projects—from the Bank of Perris to the Depot to the Perris Theatre to the interchange and the expected arrival of Metrolink in Perris in the next year—mean that the City is poised for robust growth when the economy once again begins chugging full steam.

State Sen. Bill Emerson said Perris is making great strides during a difficult economy. Emerson represents the 37th Senate District, which includes Perris.

Emmerson congratulated the City on its public-private partnership with AMCAL, calling such collaborations "the way to get things done in California."

"This town looks great," he said. "This is very impressive."

City Councilman Al Landers said projects like the Mercado provide an example of how Perris continues on the road to greatness. Landers noted that little more than a year ago, the Mercado Apartments existed only on a piece of paper. Today, the project is financed and construction set to begin.

"This is another instance of how great Perris is now and will be in the future," Landers said. "We are blessed to have a wonderful staff and a cohesive City Council. A lot of cities are on the downside. Perris is on the upside. I am so proud to serve this City."

City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said Perris is great because of its ability to form partnerships to bring about worthwhile and necessary projects.

"We are able to pull people and entities together to improve the quality of life for our residents," he said. "Our Downtown anchors are set. The Perris Gateway Project on the north and the Mercado Apartments on the south. This completes one of our main corridors."

City Councilwoman Joanne Evans said the apartments will be a boon to families seeking quality, affordable housing.

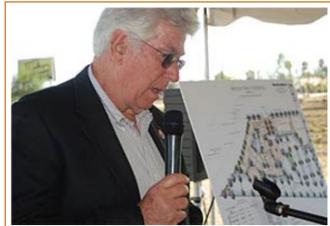
"This is going to be an awesome and affordable place to live," Evans said.



Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez explains that the Mercado Apartments will continue the ongoing renovations of historic D Street.



Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez confers with City Councilman Al Landers before the ground-breaking.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch: "We are proud to keep the ball moving forward."



The ceremonial ground-breaking



State Sen. Bill Emerson prepares to address the crowd at the ground-breaking of the Mercado Apartments complex.