



Perris News

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Perris—A Town in Transition

A recently conducted survey among selected City residents and developers echoes sentiments felt by many homeowners, business representatives and visitors—Perris is a town in transition.

No longer is Perris the rural town that depended on the railroad and harvests of alfalfa and potatoes for its livelihood.

The City, which turns 100 years old in 2011, now sits in the center of the vital Interstate 215 corridor and will serve as a lynchpin for future development along that main route through southwestern Riverside County.

Already Perris is home to several major distribution and retail centers featuring businesses like Lowe's, Whirlpool and Hanesbrands Inc., hubs that provide thousands of job to City workers.

Perris faces challenges as it takes the next steps to developing its infrastructure and business base.

But the City has many pluses too—one-of-a-kind venues like the Orange Empire Railway Museum, the Perris Valley Airport and plenty of space for residential and commercial development.

"This is an exciting time for Perris," said Greg Robinson, a Cal State Fullerton professor who analyzed the survey and presented the findings to the City Council this week. "The City needs to talk loudly about its assets and resources at the local and regional level."

The survey, conducted by the Laguna Hills-based Probolsky Research, took place between July and October and included developers, real estate representatives and residents.

The recommendations presented to the City Council include sending representatives to meetings of regional agencies, like the Riverside County Transportation Commission and the March Joint Powers Authority to aggressively market Perris' attributes. Those include lots of open spaces for development, a sense of history, several new parks and recreation fields and a laundry list of projects to improve roadways, intersections and freeway interchanges.

The City must also publicize its well received community events, like the annual "Snow Day" that drew 500 youngsters and their parents earlier this month, Robinson said.

The City has overcome obstacles in recent years, the report said.

City management and staff work closely together and form a cohesive unit. And the City earlier this month adopted a vision statement, a straightforward acclamation that it exists to provide superlative public services for its residents and the community.

Robinson said the City enjoys a solid reputation with developers and the business community as a place friendly to new industries.

One survey participant wrote: "They've done a good job at getting and attracting tenants and...making it attractive for them to move in...they've got all the tools now and now it's time to kind of finish 'tying the bow' and get more systematized."

The same respondent wrote that Perris has "a good head of steam at this point...to get a lot of good things done in the near future."

Another survey participant wrote that Perris is "a City that's good to work with, a City that's easy to sit down and have discussions with."

Future challenges, which must be addressed now, include developing specific plans and projects for when the economy turns around, Robinson said. Perris must continue to improve its roads, suppress criminal activity and graffiti and work to bring in development like the Metrolink station that soon will be built in Downtown.

Aaron Knox, a consultant who works with the City on various projects, called the survey a "road map" to the future.

"We can change a lot of perceptions and move the City forward," he said.

Mayor Daryl Busch said the City Council will unveil its long-range strategic plan at its Feb. 10 meeting. He said it is critical to keep residents informed about current projects and the long-term vision.

"We've got to let them know our vision and strategy," Busch said. "We've got to let them know where we are and where we're going."



Aerial view of the newly opened Hanesbrands distribution center.

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