



Gateway Project Cements Pride, Progress, and Partnerships



City elected officials and other dignitaries at the ceremonial ground-breaking.

Pride, progress and partnerships were the themes of the day as Perris officials broke ground on a road improvement project that will serve as a gateway to the City's unique and priceless historical Downtown region.

More than 100 residents, City officials and elected leaders and representatives of regional transportation, educational and utility groups came to City Hall Thursday for the ground-breaking of the final phase of the D Street Promenade Improvement Program.

Officially known as the "Perris Gateway Project," the \$1.5 million final installment includes decorative painting, lighting, landscaping and monument signs.

The Gateway Project also includes the construction of a streetscape between San Jacinto and First Street, traffic signals at that intersection and new railway crossing arms on San Jacinto. Construction on the project is expected to take about six months.

With the completion of the Perris Gateway, the City will have completed improvements to 3,200-feet of D Street from the Interstate 215 off-ramp south to Fourth Street, a project that began five years ago and cost about \$4.15 million.

Those improvements include landscaping, pavers, roadway paving, benches, decorative street signs and new traffic signals.

All the upgrades support a myriad of small businesses home to historic D Street, including mom-and-pop markets, restaurants, a hair salon and candy store.

Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough, the keynote speaker at Thursday's ground-breaking, called the event "not an ending but another step in our long-range vision to revitalize downtown Perris."

"It is just the next step in the journey," Yarbrough told the crowd of spectators. "We have already accomplished several milestones in the project, which has been ongoing for more than five years and which will take several more before it is completely finished. We have recently re-opened our historic Depot building on 4th Street and work is continuing on a Metro-link station that will open in 2011. The RTA Transit center is nearing completion on C Street and our Planning Department is developing a new Downtown Specific Plan."

Yarbrough added that "renovations are underway at our historic Bank Building at 4th and D and we have begun our façade improvement program to restore the architectural appearance of D Street as it looked a century ago."

Long-range plans call for development of our Mercado District from 4th Street to 11th Street, which will remake that section of D Street with bistros, shops, restaurants and other entertainment venues.

"So as you can see, even during the midst of a long-standing economic slowdown, Perris continues to move forward!" he said.

But he said none of the progress would have taken place without the alliances the City has formed over the years. Those include working relationships with the Riverside County Transportation Commission, the Economic Development Agency, Caltrans, the Riverside Transit Agency, the Val Verde School District, Perris Union High School District, numerous contractors, vendors and elected representatives at the county, state and federal level.

Representatives of many of those agencies came out Thursday. Those included Barry Busch, field representative for Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley; Evita Tapia, field representative for State Sen. John Benoit; Betty Gibbel, Eastern Municipal Water District; Christy Connors, Caltrans; Jonathan Greenberg, Perris Union High School District Superintendent; William Hulstrom, PUHSD trustee; Cathy Bechtel, from RCTC; Bonnie Flickinger and Bill Batey, who represented Moreno Valley and Shelly Yarbrough and Vince Agnifili, both of the Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce and Lea Peterson, representing The Gas Company. Also attending were City Councilman Al Landers, Planning Commissioners Judy Haughney and Henry Martin and numerous City staff members. Riverside County Sheriff Stan Sniff also attended.

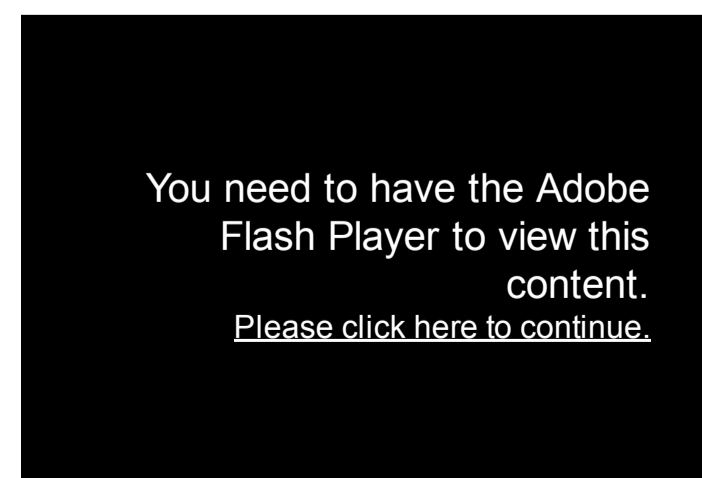
Speaker after speaker praised the Perris City Council and staff for their vision and ability to continue development even during a prolonged recession.

"Projects like this show the powerful impact of partnerships to bring things to fruition," Tapia said. Caltrans' Connor said she "commended the teamwork and dedication in getting this project off the ground."

"This City should be proud of its leaders," she said. City Manager Richard Belmudez said the City Council years ago made the commitment to invest in the Downtown Area.

"After all this planning, our diverse and vibrant Downtown is starting to come together," he said. "This is a fun time for us. This is a great day."

[See a short video clip](#)



Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough, Councilman Al Landers and Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce CEO Shelly Yarbrough salute during the Pledge of Allegiance at the ground-breaking ceremony for the Perris Gateway Project.



City Manager Richard Belmudez, Riverside County Sheriff Stan Sniff, Mayor Pro-Tem Yarbrough and Councilman Landers discuss the ceremonies at the Perris City Hall Campus.