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Perris to Add More Commercial and Retail Options for Perris Residents

Perris elected representatives and economic development specialists have heard the calls from the public—more sit-down restaurants, more clothing shops, boutique businesses, a gym, shopping anchors to lure smaller shops to the City.

Staff and municipal-government officials met with developers, retail and commercial on an individual and group basis, touting the benefits of locating to Perris. Lots of open space, affordable housing, a business-friendly community, central location in Riverside County, one of the fastest growing regions in the state and a growing population eager to spend money in their home town.

There have been times when developers have indicated willingness to move to Perris, only to back out if the economy slows or internal corporate analytics dictate retrenchment.

But times are changing.

The City broke ground Tuesday (Aug. 21) on a major expansion at the Perris Plaza Shopping Center, one that will bring seven new businesses to Perris, create dozens of new jobs, potentially pour millions into the local economy and spur even more business expansion in the City.

The new businesses include Burlington, Ross, Planet Fitness, Ulta Beauty, Mountain Mike's Pizza, Five Below and Hibbett Sports. The Perris Plaza ground-breaking comes just two weeks after the City broke ground on a fueling center, food mart and car wash at San Jacinto and Redlands boulevards.

"It's a milestone—a major breakthrough," Mayor Michael Vargas said. "Now we have the ammunition to attract others stores and merchants to Perris. It gives us the motivation to keep up our pursuit of bigger and better buying options for our community."

Keeping the momentum

Vargas said dealing with commercial developers can be frustrating at times. More than one potential suitor has told Vargas and other City representatives the Perris needs "more rooftops" (homes) before considering locating here.

But that attitude belies the fact that, like many communities, Perris is home to lots of families with adult children still living with their parents. Those young adults have purchasing power, Vargas said.

"They have jobs, they have money and they want to spend it in their hometown," he said. "It's very frustrating. We hear the wants and needs of our people but we can't dictate which companies come to our City."

Meeting with frustrated residents and explaining how the development process works has helped get the word out that Perris representatives and economic development experts remain relentless in efforts to attract in-demand businesses.

A team effort

Mayor Pro-Tem Malcolm Corona agreed that landing businesses like the ones moving to the Perris Plaza represents "the culmination of hard work on the part of staff and the City Council."

"It's a victory, but we're still not satisfied," Corona said. "More retail means our shopping options have been multiplied. One of our top priorities is bringing more retail to Perris. We will continue to outreach to corporations and developers and invite them to our City so they can learn what a growing and vibrant place Perris has become."

Birthing a baby

City Councilwoman Tonya Burke compared commercial and retail development to birthing a baby. It can seem long and be painful but in the end, the end result is worth the worry and struggle. Burke said future businesses will fan out from the Perris Plaza to north and south ends of the City.

"You're going to see new businesses from one end of Perris to the other," Burke said. "So many fabulous things will be coming to Perris in the future."

Burke said the City's logistics and fulfillment centers—like Home Depot and Wayfair—indicate Perris' commitment to e-commerce, as increasing numbers of people shop online. Online purchases, like those at brick-and-mortar locations, bring the retail and sales taxes to Perris coffers.

"We are approaching economic development from every angle," Burke said. "We are reaping the best of every angle. The best is yet to come."

Hearing and answering

City Councilman David Starr Rabb said Perris elected representatives and managers are "committed full bore" to attracting and developing more retail choices for residents.

The Perris Plaza groundbreaking, coupled with a smaller groundbreaking at the Commons of Perris earlier in August, will spur even greater retail development in the future.

"I'm looking forward to it," Rabb said. "Next year, people will be able to go back-to school and Christmas shopping at these stores. It takes a lot of behind-the-scenes efforts to get to a ground-breaking—years of efforts."

City Councilwoman Rita Rogers, the senior elected official, agreed it is not uncommon for years, even decades, for some developers to break ground and begin construction. Rogers noted that the Lewis Group, which will develop the property on which the new service plaza will open, has owned that site for 14 years.

Rogers estimated she's attended at least a dozen ICSC (International Council of Shopping Centers) conventions and spoken to dozens, if not hundreds, of commercial and retail developers in her 19 years on the Perris City Council. Her long tenure as a public official has taught her a most valuable lesson about business development: patience is a virtue.

"It takes many years to bring businesses to any community, not just Perris," she said. "Each businesses uses its own criteria in determining where to locate. But we have heard the voice of our constituents and we are relentless in our efforts to answer their desires. It's very important for Perris to be very aggressive in our efforts to attract business. And we are."

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