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Smart Solution Saves Splash Pad Water for Parks

The City of Perris faced a challenge: keep the water flowing at the iconic Mercado Park splash pad so kids could remain cool on hot days without losing it to evaporation and runoff.

The solution: construct a reservoir to collect and store water from the splash pad and use that water to not only irrigate Mercado Park but also two other parks and hundreds of trees planted throughout the City.

The result: Savings of more than 45 million gallons of water, plenty of happy and refreshed youngsters and another example of how Perris employs creative ways that enhances its commitment to sustainability.

"This is another project aimed at maximizing a precious resource like water," said Public Works Manager Daryl Hartwill.

The system works by collecting water from the splash pad into a nearby reservoir. The water is pumped about 300-feet via PVC piping to a 20,000-gallon holding tank. Public Works employees empty the large tank every morning and haul the water to nearby Metz and Rotary parks to irrigate that turf. The collected runoff also irrigate trees throughout Perris.

Hartwill said Public Works and Community Services employees worked to bring the collection system to reality.

"We were happy to put this project in place," Hartwill said. "It allows us to maximize a reusable resource like water."

Creative solutions are nothing new for Perris.

The City installed a solar-panel collection almost a decade ago to generate electricity on its campus while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The City gradually replaced its gasoline powered vehicles with cleaner burning natural gas and propane and has installed high-efficiency low-maintenance lightbulbs along streets and neighborhoods throughout the community. Perris officials opted for artificial turf at its Patriot Park Soccer Complex which opened last year and employed coconut husks to cool the playing surface. Drought-resistant landscaping adorns City road medians.



Perris Public Works employee Isauro Castillo watches as water is pumped from a 20,000-gallon tank to a portable tank for use at other City parks.

"Win-win"

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch said the long-standing drought forced the City to shut down the splash pad for a year. When the attraction reopened this summer, City officials knew they had to get creative so they could recapture the water and put it to good use.

"The City and our staff came up with this solution, which is a win-win all the way around," Busch said. "We're really proud of what they've done. It's an innovative and creative solution that benefits our residents, our parks and our community."

Mayor Pro Tem Rita Rogers noted the City received awards for Mercado Park.

Turning off the splash pad to save water was heart-breaking as many underprivileged residents in the Downtown area use to keep cool and recreate. Rogers said keeping the water flowing in what has been an "extraordinarily hot summer" adds to the quality of life for those folks, she said.

"I am very proud that our staff is empowered to come up with creative ways to improve life in our City," Rogers said. "I really applaud their creativity."



Water captured from Mercado Park's splash pad irrigates the field at Rotary Park.

"A welcome addition"

City Councilwoman Tonya Burke praised the cooperation among elected officials, Perris administrators and municipal staff to keep Mercado Park's water flowing.

"It is important that we send a clear message that we are going to protect our environment by using our water wisely," she said. "As a City Council, we have a lot of great ideas but we are blessed with a wonderful, talented and innovative team that puts those ideas into action. We are once again leading the pack in terms of innovation. First place is a nice place to be."

City Councilman David Starr Rabb called the Mercado Park project a "welcome addition to the City of Perris."

"We will now be able to reopen the park for our residents," he said.

City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said Mercado Park was built specifically to serve underserved residents who live on modest incomes and can't afford to attend water parks.

"Without water, it's not a lot of good," Yarbrough said. "But one of the great things about our staff is its ability to think outside the box. We have a small staff in Perris but one that is highly effective."

Media Contact

Joe Vargo
Public Information Officer
951-943-6100
jvargo@cityofperris.org



Perris City Hall
101 N. D Street
Perris, CA 92570

Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8 am - 6pm

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