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## Excellence Award for Mercado Park Project



Perris residents take part in a Winter Workout at Mercado Park, a popular venue for a variety of recreational and community-based activities.

The City of Perris has received an award for excellence from the California Parks & Recreation Society for developing and building Mercado Park, which opened in 2013 amid great fanfare and has proved a hugely popular gathering spot in the City's disadvantaged Downtown area.

Since its opening nearly two years ago, Mercado Park has provided a water play-area for youngsters living nearby, hosted a series of Saturday-morning workouts and several evening movie-showings, served as the site of a boxing skills clinic that drew more than 1,000 people and also served as the site of the City's Farmers Market.

City officials were notified this month they had won Parks and Recreation Society's "Award for Excellence."

In a written statement to Sabrina Chavez, the City's Assistant Director of Development Services, CPRS Executive Director Stephanie Stephens praised Perris for its initiative in bringing the 3.25-acre, \$3.4-million Mercado Park to life.

She further commended Perris officials for "addressing community issues, recreation programming, park planning, facility design, and marketing and communications" throughout the development of Mercado.



Colorful creations shaped like flowers make Mercado Park an inviting place for families and children to spend time.

"Park and recreation agencies throughout the state provide families, individuals and groups access to the serenity and inspiration of nature; spaces and places for play and exercise; opportunities for directed and self-directed recreation; positive alternatives for youth to reduce crime and mischief; and activities that facilitate social connections, human development, therapy, the arts, and lifelong learning," Stephens said.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch praised the City's staff who applied for state-grant money and received funding to plan and build Mercado Park.

"It took a lot of hard work to put all the pieces together and without that work, none of this would have taken place," Busch said. "Mercado Park is an excellent recreational facility, it is very well-used and the community loves it. It makes our City a better place and we are all very grateful for that."

Chavez, said Mercado Park addressed a need for recreational facilities in a disadvantaged and blighted area of Perris. The neighborhood surrounding Mercado Park at 10th and D Streets consists of low to moderate-income families who have no other nearby playground.



Drought-resistant landscaping adds to the sustainability of Mercado Park in Downtown Perris.

"Mercado Park is a neighborhood park, providing recreational fitness and nature in close proximity to residents," Chavez said. "Mercado Park has been a substantial benefit to the community, as well as the City. As a result of Mercado Park, the loyalty for parks and recreation services has been evident, and the community has become more involved with the park's preservation. It has been the willingness of residents to volunteer and monitor park activities, and the tremendous amount of people taking part of the park's benefits, which promotes the Parks Make Life Better! campaign within the community."

The *Parks Make Life Better!* campaign seeks to raise awareness of the benefits of parks and recreation throughout California and to raise the status of parks and recreation as an essential community service.

The California Parks & Recreation Society is composed of 3,300 members representing the 535 local parks and recreation agencies throughout the state. Its mission is to advance the profession and its members through education, networking, resources, and advocacy.

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