



🏠 home > city hall > press releases

City Receives Award for Mercado Park

The City of Perris received an award March 31 for designing and developing Mercado Park, which provided badly needed open space and recreational activities in an underserved part of the City's Downtown area.

The award, from the California Park and Recreation Society, was presented March 31 during the Perris City Council meeting. Lydie Gutfeld, a board member of the Sacramento-based group, presented the honor to City Councilmembers Julio Rodriguez and Rita Rogers, who serve on the council's parks and recreation committee.



Lydie Gutfeld, a representative of the California Park and Recreation Society, presents the award for development of Mercado Park to Perris City Councilmembers Julio Rodriguez and Rita Rogers.

Gutfeld said the City "hit it out of the ballpark" when it conceived and received funding for Mercado Park, which opened in 2013 amid great fanfare and has been widely acclaimed by nearby residents and park users community wide.

Since its opening, the park has served as the site of weekend workouts that were part of the City's Live Well Perris healthy-eating active-living program, hosted the farmer's market and a boxing-skills clinic that drew more than 1,000 residents.

The City was honored with the CPRS's Excellence in Design—Park Planning Award. The award recognizes projects demonstrating "high standards of planning, design, community involvement, operation and maintenance, quality of aesthetics, usability, accessibility and versatility."

"Parks make life better," Gutfeld told members of the City Council. "You should be proud of this park and this award. It is very competitive. It is not an easy one to win."

Mercado Park, at 10th and D Streets, boasts water-play areas, an amphitheater, basketball court, shaded areas, picnic tables and sustainable ground-covering. The City received a \$3.4 million state grant to build the 2.6-acre park. Before presenting the award, Gutfeld said she stopped by Mercado Park and was delighted to see parents and their children playing and spending time together.

"I heard children laughing, saw families interacting, enjoying fitness, recreation and leisure activities," she said. "It's awesome, bright, colorful and it certainly stands out. It's a great step forward for the City. Perris is providing families a great place to play."

Rodriguez and Rogers agreed the City is committed to providing parks that provide open spaces, recreation, family time and improved quality of life to Perris residents. In addition to building Mercado Park, Perris officials in recent months have upgraded Metz, Morgan and Morgan Park and volunteers recently spruced up Foss Field Park. The City has also opened the Big League Dreams sports complex and Drop Zone Aquatics Center.

Rogers said Perris residents have asked for a Downtown park for years. Providing the park was a labor of love.

"It's always nice receive a statewide award that honors our commitment to parks and recreation activities in Perris," Rogers said. "Mercado Park is a great place for kids, for families, for the community and for the City."

Rodriguez said he hopes the recent award spurs Perris to continue growing the number of parks. Rodriguez was one of several Perris representatives—led by Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin and staff members Sabrina Chavez, Josh Estrada, Rachel Pinedo and Cynthia Quintero—who attended a conference in which the City was notified it won the CPRS award.

"Parks make life better," Rodriguez said. "I think our residents prove that."

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