

G Street Underpass opens for business - and traffic, too

\$18 million project on time and on budget

It began in July, 2010, with the closure of G Street at the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad tracks. The promise was to have the road opened and an underpass completed by December 2011.

The City finished the project and opened the road Dec. 3 following a celebration with the community.

The underpass is the largest road project in the City's history. It involved the complete reconstruction of the railroad crossing, the installation of 45 pilings to hold the bridge and construction of a massive storm water drainage system.

The project also involved rerouting sewer and water lines, along with moving natural gas lines and power poles.

The project cost \$18 million. In addition, the City spent another \$2.4 million for improvements in the project area, includ-

ing a \$1.1 million water line replacement.

The paving schedule was moved up to October to beat the early winter storm that dumped an inch of rain on the City. Staff estimates work would have been delayed at least three to four weeks to dry everything out if the asphalt had not been laid prior to the storm's arrival.

The storm drain system required a 36-inch and 30-inch storm drain pipe, along with the five pumps to drain water. The project has an electrical system with seven control panels.

The project also has an emergency generator and security cameras. Landscapers planted the 6,000 bushes and 200 trees to reduce road noises and beautify the project.

The new 26th Street traffic signal wasn't part of the project, but was completed to avoid further inconvenience to residents.



The G Street underpass before it was opened to the public.

Underpass funding

The \$18 million project is funded by:

CA Transportation Commission	\$9 million
Merced Redevelopment Agency	\$4.8 million
City Public Facility Financing (Impact fees)	\$2.3 million
Burlington Northern & Santa Fe RR	\$1.9 million

No general fund money was used in the project. The money spent on the underpass could not be used to pay for police or fire personnel.

Water rates unchanged

There will be no increase in City Water rates for 2012. The rates had been scheduled to increase 3 percent based on the Consumer Price Index.

City staff has managed to hold costs down and the revenue stream has held steady.

The City will conduct a review of the rates and charges to evaluate what the future funding needs will be.



Yosemite Avenue project begins

The intersection of G Street and Yosemite Avenue will get a major facelift soon.

The Yosemite Avenue Improvements Project will widen the road on the Raley's side of Yosemite and it will become a full arterial roadway.

Once completed, the project will eliminate the bottleneck at the G Street intersection and allow better flow of traffic.

The \$1.8 million project will widen 1/4 of a mile of road from G to Mansionette Avenue, replace the deteriorated pavement

and improve the traffic signals.

City staff has been working with businesses in the area, along with schools, churches and neighbors, to keep them up-to-date on the project.

Because of the seasonal nature of the businesses, there will be several stretches when work on the road shuts down to give patrons better access to the Raley's Center.

More news and updates on the project can be found on the "The Streets of Merced" on Facebook or the City website.

Merced City Council

Mayor Stan Thurston

Council Members:

Bill Blake

Tony Dossetti

Noah Lor

Mike Murphy

Josh Pedrozo

Mary-Michal Rawling

Contact the City Council by email at Citycouncil@cityofmerced.org, by calling 385-6834 or writing to Council members at the Civic Center address below.

Council meetings

The Council meets on the first and third Monday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers in the Civic Center, 678 W. 18th St. The agenda is posted online at www.CityofMerced.org.

Contacting us

The Web site, www.CityofMerced.org, contains City Council information, the Muni Code, General Plan and other information. Contact the Newsletter at newsletter@CityofMerced.org, call the Public Information Office at 385-6232 or write:

Merced Civic Center

Attn: Public Information Office

678 W. 18th St.

Merced CA 95340

The Civic Center is open Monday-Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., except holidays.

Call us

City Council	385-6834
City Manager	385-6834
City Attorney	385-6868
City Clerk	388-7100
Airport	385-6873
Code Enforcement.....	385-6861
Finance	388-7900
Inspection Services	385-6861
Personnel.....	388-7100
Planning Department.....	385-6858
Public Works (7:30-4:30) ...	385-6800
After hours	385-6905
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**IN AN EMERGENCY
DIAL 911**

Fire Department..... 385-6891

Police Department 385-6912

Ask the City: Theft from recycling cans

Ask the City is an ongoing column answering questions that have been submitted to us by mail, email or phone. Readers can submit their questions to the addresses in the column on the left.

Isn't the money from recycling supposed to help the city pay for the program and lower our garbage bills? Thieves are being allowed to steal our recyclables... police tell us that after we put our cans out on the street... that we, "have no expectation of privacy." Why then are we paying high fees for recycling if we have thieves picking it up for free?

RA

No. 1: People should always remember to never put ANYTHING in the trash that could lead to identity theft. Invest in a shredder and turn that into confetti.

Yes, the material sold does help offset the costs of the program, depending on what price it will obtain on the open market. We expect to receive about \$120,000, based on market prices in 2011, from all the materials sold for a \$1.5 million recycling program.

We would be making more money on recycling if it was mostly made up of aluminum cans, but it is not. Most of the recycling is cardboard, paper, glass and plastic jugs

and bottles. Those items don't generate much money on the open market, but it does keep it out of the landfill.

Recycling was never intended to be a money-making enterprise, it is intended to help keep the planet green and to help us comply with a state mandate. As of January 1, 2000 we had to divert 50 percent of the refuse we dumped at a landfill into either recycling or green waste or prevent it from getting thrown away.

Scavengers are a problem throughout the state and no one has come up with a viable solution. There are state and local laws on the books that make scavenging a criminal activity, but this is a low priority for police dealing with other crimes.

There are examples of communities that have hired "trash cops" to go after the scavengers, but that raises the program's costs.

The advice from one city to residents:

- ✓ Keep the blue recycling bin in the garage or other secure area on non-collection days.
- ✓ Wait until the morning of collection day to put the blue bin at the curb.
- ✓ Place glass and aluminum recyclables at the bottom of the bin, underneath paper and cardboard.

City offices closed for Christmas and New Years

City offices will be closed Monday, Dec. 26 to observe the Christmas holiday and also Monday, Jan. 2 for New Year's.

The closure will not affect trash collection in the City. Pickup will be your normal

day of trash collection.

Offices also will be closed Jan. 16 for Martin Luther King's birthday. Trash collection will be delayed by one day for the entire week.

Your tree can become compost

Think Green

Once the holidays are over, your Christmas tree can be recycled to compost.

First, remove all ornaments, lights and other decorations, including tinsel and the tree stand. They can be recycled and used next year.

Place your tree into your green waste container. If it is over 6 feet high, cut it into 4-foot-lengths.

Trees placed along the street curb WILL NOT be collected.

Sorry, but flocked trees with the fake white snow can't go in the green container. They should be chopped to fit in your gray trash can.

Trees should not be burned in fireplaces. This can be very dangerous.

At this time apartment complex residents should use their garbage container.

Call 385-6800 for more information.

