

City lowers fees, speeds up permits

To attract new investment and entice existing businesses to expand, the City of Merced is lowering its development fees and speeding up its permit approval processes.

Commercial Impact Fees: Across the board, the Public Facility Impact Fee has been cut for commercial projects by 25 percent. The fee reduction benefits **all** commercial projects. If a new project locates or expands within the Infill Area, take an additional 28 percent off the impact fees. Projects in the area generally bordered by Bear Creek, Highway 59, Parsons and Childs Avenue may see fees reduced by up to 53 percent. With the new fees in place, a number of retailers and developers have visited the City evaluating potential project sites.

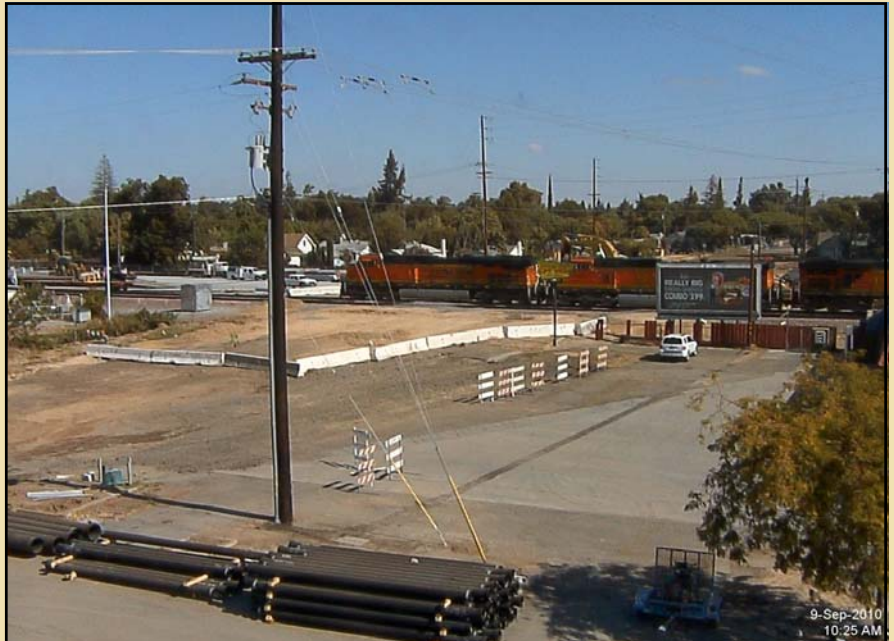
Residential Impact Fees: The City Council is considering reducing Residential Public Facility Impact Fees by at least 50 percent. The idea of lowering the residential fees is to stimulate the construction industry leading to more jobs and to the purchase of large ticket items such as appliances and lumber. The fee applies only to approved existing subdivision lots. Certain standards such as home owner occupancy and paying property taxes are required.

Sewer Connection Fees: Depending on the type of development or expansion taking place, Sewer Connection Fees were lowered for each category. When the City of Merced went out to bid for the expansion of the wastewater treatment plant, the bids came in about 50 percent lower than anticipated. As result, Council was able to approve reducing the sewer connection fee. The reduction helps to keep costs down for retail and commercial projects.

Faster plan processing: The City is testing a new plan check process to help get projects started faster. The paperless plan review and check program is saving businesses time so retailers are able to serve to the market and public faster. The building permit for Anna's Linens was issued in less than one hour using the new review.

The lowered fees and expedited permit are being touted to major developers, retailers, and leasing agents throughout California. For more information on fees and paperless permit review, call the Office of Economic Development at (209) 385-4788 or Development Services Department at (209) 385-6858.

Watch the Big Dig grow



A Burlington Northern and Santa Fe train crosses G Street, as work continues on the undercrossing project at that location. The community can follow construction of the project through a web cam mounted above the project site. It takes three photos every 20 minutes from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Photos are taken of the G and 23rd Street work, the G and 24th Street section and the site of the undercrossing, shown above. People can find the three different pictures on the City's web site, www.cityofmerced.org.

Please drive slowly in the construction zone

The G Street Undercrossing project will result in a quick route under the BNSF tracks. However, until it opens, it's creating some traffic problems for the project neighbors.

Unfortunately, some drivers think the speed limit on the side streets is the same as G Street, so they are flying through the neighborhoods.

The speed limit is 25 mph OR LESS on those streets. The Basic Speed Law in California says you never drive faster than is safe for current conditions, no matter what the posted signs say.

And it appears a lot of people have

forgotten that the speed limit at an uncontrolled intersection is 15 mph for all drivers. (An uncontrolled intersection is one that doesn't have any stop signs or traffic signals on any of the streets.)

In the first month G Street was closed, the Merced Police Traffic Division wrote more than 200 tickets for speeding and wrote reports on more than 20 accidents.

Traffic enforcement will continue to be stepped up until motorists learn to slow down and pay attention to the rules of the road. Respect the speed limits, and the neighborhood.

Merced City Council

Mayor Bill Spriggs
Council Members:
Bill Blake
John Carlisle
Michele Gabriault-Acosta
Noah Lor
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 usually meets on the first and third Monday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers in the Civic Center. The agenda is posted online at www.CityofMerced.org.

Contacting us

The Web site, www.CityofMerced.org, contains City Council information, the Municipal 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 8 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
Parks/CommServices	385-6855
Utility payments.....	388-7289

IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 911

Fire Department..... 385-6891
Police Department 385-6912

Ask the City: City salaries posted online

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.

I want to request some information on City Council officials' salaries. (And what about the City Manager, Assistant City Manager and everyone down below them.

A recent call from the news media

It's all online, and if you don't have access to a computer, come on down to the

City Clerk's Office on the first floor of the Merced Civic Center, 678 W. 18th St. and we will be glad to provide the information.

The City of Merced believes in "transparency," the buzz word for open government. Basically, everything we do is open and available to the public, and much of it is online.

There's a link on our Home Page directing you to the page with City Council and top management salaries.

There also is a link to a page that has the salary schedule for every employee in the City. That is an item often requested by the news

media.

If you want to know what the City Manager does or a Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator III duties, we have those and every other job description in the City online.

The web site has loads of other information, from in-depth documentation of the Wal-Mart project, to the agendas of the Bicycle Advisory Committee. Agendas, and meeting minutes are also available.

You can sign up online for email notices of agendas, bids, RFPs and City news.

And all of the City newsletters are online, too.

Water less in the fall

The sizzling days of summer are gone, and we are entering the more temperate season of autumn. It's time to set the sprinklers to water the lawns and gardens less.

The days are getting shorter and the plants don't need as much water. Cutting back will help your plants, and it will help reduce your water bill.



Think Green

Maintaining the yard can be green, too

It's a startling statistic: A gas-powered lawn mower produces as much pollution in an hour as 40 late-model cars.

And, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, a gas-powered leaf blower isn't much better. It can emit 40 times the pollution of a car over the course of a year.

Leaf blowers clog the air in other ways too. While blowing leaves away, it also kicks up a cloud of dust, dirt and tiny particulates that are spewed into the air. And then there is the noise pollution that goes along with the blower. More than 40 California communities restrict leaf blowers.

There are green alternatives to gas-powered garden tools.

The obvious one is the manual push mower and a push broom. It's a light workout (depending on the size of the yard) and it's good for the neighborhood's air.

Electric-powered mowers and blowers

don't emit all the greenhouse gases (but there still is the noise and dust issue with the blowers).

Most people can't afford to run out and replace the tools. The District does have the Clean Green Yard Machines program so people can trade in a gas mower for an electric mower at a discounted price. (Call 557-6400 or go to Valleyair.org for information).

If you have to keep the gas machine, here are some simple ways to make it cleaner.

Number 1: Don't spill fuel when gas-sing it up. That gasoline evaporates and clogs up our air with smog.

Number 2: Maintain the engine. Give it regular tune-ups. Change the oil and replace air filters. Use the right mix of fuel and oil in two-stroke engines.

Remember, we all breathe the same air, so let's keep it clean.