

Merced Theatre listed on Register

The Merced Theatre is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service. The Theatre has been a Downtown landmark since it opened October 31, 1931 with Joe E. Brown starring in "Local Boy Makes Good."

Being listed on the National Register highlights the historic significance of the Merced Theatre, helps preservation efforts and also makes it eligible for grants to refurbish the building.

The Theatre was designed by James and Merritt Reid, two San Francisco-based architects who built a number of Bay Area theaters. They also designed the Hotel del Coronado in San Diego and the Fairmont Hotel and Cliff House in San Francisco.

The Merced Theatre building may have been the last designed by the Reid Brothers because Merritt died three months after the theater opened and James retired. The Merced Theatre was their only theater project

in the Central Valley.

Inside the Theatre, patrons were transported to a Spanish castle courtyard, with blue skies and a cloud machine. There were elegant box seats overlooking the stage, and turrets and spires adding to the motif.

When the Theatre opened it was the first air conditioned building in Merced County and could hold 1,645 people, about a quarter of the City's population.

For decades it served as a movie theater, graduation auditorium and concert hall for the community. In 1978 it was purchased by United Artists, who gutted the interior of its handcrafted embellishments and turned the stately structure into a four-plex.

The Theatre closed in 2002 and was purchased by the City of Merced Redevelopment Agency. It is currently being restored to its original glory through grants, RDA funds and fundraising efforts by the Merced Theatre Foundation. (www.mercedtheatre.org)



Smaller City budget reflects national economic downturn

In June, the City Council approved the 2009-2010 general fund budget of approximately \$36 million.

The City budget was reduced more than 12 percent due to steep drops in the sales and property taxes reflecting the state of the national economy.

The budget priorities are preserving public safety and preventing neighborhood blight.

When residents call 911, police officers and firefighters will continue to respond quickly.

However, service levels in all departments will be reduced because of the cuts in personnel. Non-emergency calls to police and fire will have a lower priority, and there may be longer waits for service from other City

departments.

Department budgets were cut 12 to 15 percent to balance the budget. More than 75 positions were eliminated or frozen, and 14 employees received layoff notices.

Employee benefits were reduced and merit pay raises were also frozen for a year to balance the budget.

The City does have a five-year budget plan designed to weather the current economic downturn. An unknown factor is the State, because there is talk of taking local money to solve the state's financial problems.

The City is expecting to receive several million dollars in federal stimulus funds for projects ranging from roadwork

to homeless assistance.

On a bright note, due to the downturn in construction, bids for the upgraded wastewater

treatment plant came in at about half of the original \$60 million estimate, ultimately saving rate-payers money.

Olive Avenue to be rebuilt in July

The City operates its budgets on the fiscal year that begins July 1 and ends the following year on June 30. Money allocated in one budget year can be carried over to the next year, and sometimes longer.

This is what is happening with the Olive Avenue street project that was approved by the Council in June.

The \$1.88 million project will rebuild Olive Avenue from Highway 59 to G Street.

Traditional road reconstruc-

tion would tear up the road and shut it down to traffic for at least a month.

The City plans to use a process called "cold foam processing" that requires only limited road closures. The process uses a machine that digs up the roadway, grinds it up, adds some extra ingredients and lays it back down.

To avoid tying up the road during the day, all of the work will be conducted at night. The work will begin July 13.

Merced City Council

Mayor Ellie Wooten
Mayor Pro Tem John Carlisle
Joe Cortez
Michele Gabriault-Acosta
Noah Lor
Jim Sanders
Bill Spriggs

Contact the City Council by email at Citycouncil@cityofmerced.org, by calling 385-6834. You can write to Council members at the Civic Center address listed 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 at www.CityofMerced.org.

Holiday

City offices will be closed Friday, July 3 to celebrate the Fourth of July holiday. Refuse collection will be on the regular schedule.

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
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
Recreation/Parks	385-6855

IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 911

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

Ask the City: Starting or stopping City services

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

How do I stop/start my sewer, water, garbage service?

Along with police and fire protection, the City exists to provide clean drinking water, sewage disposal and the collection of our garbage. Those last three services protect us from all sorts of diseases and illnesses, and reduce the number of rats and other rodents.

The Public Works Department provides those services from their headquarters on

Grogan Avenue. The City has 19 water wells, one wastewater treatment plant, and a bunch of trucks to collect our garbage, green matter and recyclables.

If there is a problem with any of those services, call the Public Works Department at 385-6800.

However, if you want to start or stop your sewer, water or garbage service don't call the Public Works Department. They will just refer you to the City Finance Department, which handles almost everything dealing with money and payments.

The correct number to call to start and stop City sewer, water and garbage service is 385-6841.

SummerFest

Hot times Downtown

The Downtown Merced SummerFest kicks off its eight week run of fun at 5 p.m. Thursday, June 18. The street faire, food festival, fun-a-thon will feature artisans, crafts, farm-fresh produce, music, food booths and kids' stuff.

SummerFest will take place on Main and Canal streets, and Bob Hart Square from 5 to 8 p.m. Sponsored by The City of Merced, the event will run through Aug. 20th, skipping July 2 (Independence Day) and July 23 (Fair Week).

New Development Services Director

Acting Director of Development Services David Gonzalves has been appointed permanently to the position by City Manager John Bramble.

Gonzalves, 43, has been serving as the acting director since July 2008.

The position was previously held by Jack Lesch, who retired from the City last year.

As the Director, Gonzalves will oversee the operations of the Planning Department, Inspection Services, Engineering Department, Housing and also



Code Enforcement.

Think Green

What color is your car? And driving?

There are ways to become a green driver, even if you don't own a hybrid vehicle. Some tips for green transportation are:

Check your air filter and replace it if you can't see light through it.

Keep tires at the correct pressure. Underinflated tires waste an estimated 4 million gallons of gas a day and wear out your tires.

Check your vehicle man-

ual to see how often you should change your oil. Some cars can go up to 7,000 miles between changes. Changing oil too frequently wastes it and drains your wallet.

Empty your trunk of extra weight. You can lose 1 to 2 percent of your fuel economy for every 100 extra pounds carried.

Be a smooth driver, not a start and stop driver. Keep

a constant speed on the freeway, usually best at between 55 and 60 mph. Speeding and hitting the brakes can increase fuel consumption by up to 40 percent.

Uncle Morty was right, it is more fuel efficient to use the air conditioner in the summer than opening the window. The open windows increase drag and make the engine work harder, eating up the gas.