

Do you know the way to...

New directional signs guide visitors and residents around

There's a new look to the City, as a series of directional signs have sprouted up along the streets. The wayfinding signs sport a distinctive blue and gold color scheme, with the Merced Theatre topping them off.

The 80 signs are intended to help newcomers and visitors navigate around the City streets and find what they are looking for, whether it is the Civic Center, downtown parking or the Chamber of Commerce.

The signs are part of the Downtown Strategy adopted in 1999. A group of local citizens created the document that is a blueprint for the revitalization of the Downtown.

The group concluded that it doesn't matter how many historical treasures or shopping opportunities there are in Merced if no one can find them.

People are directed by the signs to a

diverse number of places, from UC Merced to the Merced Mall, from the Applegate Park Zoo to the Merced County Fairgrounds.

The first batch of 60 signs went up in August, with another 20 to be installed after that and 10 signs being held in reserve.

A special graffiti-resistant coating covers the signs to keep them free from vandalism. Designing, manufacturing and installing the signs has cost approximately \$110,000. The Redevelopment capital improvement funds can only be spent on one-time expenses.

Along with helping newcomers find their way around, the directional signs have an economic purpose.

It's been found that signs like ours lure people off the beaten path, and give them an opportunity to spend a bit more time and money in town.



Wayfinding signs like this are going up all over the City to direct people around town.

Vacation is over, watch out for school children

That groaning sound you hear is from kids across the City saying goodbye to summer vacation and hello to the school year.

The idea of students heading back after Labor Day is "old school" as classes began in mid-August.

The start of school means more traffic on the roads, an increase of 21 to 27 percent according to a national study.

And there are definitely more vehicles around the neighborhood schools, as parents drop kids off and pick them up. Drive defensively and remember that drivers and pedestrians may not be paying attention to you.

Traffic officers will be out in force to raise awareness levels and get people to slow down.

In the months ahead there will

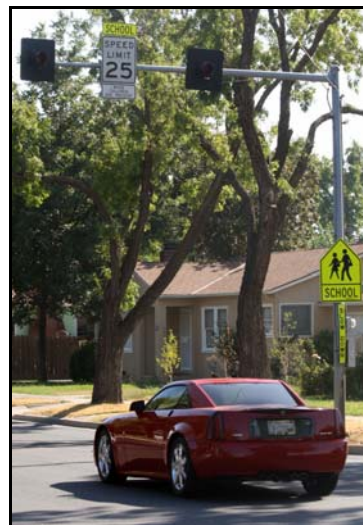
be a number of safety improvements made around schools as part of a state Safe Routes to Schools grant.

New stoplights will be installed at Fremont School, (22nd and R streets) and Farmdale School, (G Street and Gerard).

Sidewalks, curbs and gutters will be installed along Santa Fe Drive near Hoover Middle School and along Gerard Avenue near Pioneer School.

Flashing warning signs will be installed at:

Reyes Elementary School
Tenaya Middle School
Gracey Elementary School
Muir Elementary School
Hoover Middle School
Burbank Elementary School
Peterson Elementary School
Rivera Middle School.



A number of signs like this will be going up around eight schools later this year as part of a Safe Routes to Schools grant the City received.

School safety tips

Watch for kids on foot or bikes when you back out of your garage or driveway.

Slow down in school zones and watch for kids.

Look out for kids playing or waiting at bus stops.

Not all streets have sidewalks, so beware of kids walking in the streets.

Obey the flashing lights and signs on school buses. If the stop arm is out, do not pass the bus because you might hit a child crossing.

Remember, there are a lot of drivers around area high schools who don't have much experience behind the wheel. Drive defensively.

Merced City Council

Mayor Ellie Wooten
Mayor Pro Tem John Carlisle
Council members:
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 posted online at www.CityofMerced.org.

Contacting us

The Web site, www.CityofMerced.org, contains City Council information, the Municipal Code and General Plan and other information. To contact the Newsletter, e-mail 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: What is going on downtown?

Ask the City is a recurring 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.

We've had several people ask, "What is all the road work going on in front of the Civic Center?"

When you are dodging bulldozers and getting redirected around detour signs it's not always easy to recognize a "downtown improvement."

The \$1.1 million Redevelopment Agency project will cause some parking and traffic disruptions through this month, but it will look awesome once it's done.

The finished product will boast brick pavers that match the Main Street Improve-



ments, diagonal parking on N Street, new gutters and sidewalks and additional landscaping.

The project area is the block bounded by 18th and 19th streets and M and N streets — the block that has the new Merced College Downtown Center, the new parking structure and the future home of the downtown hotel.

Breakfast and station tours offered by MFD

The annual Pancake Breakfast/Fire Station Open House will be held from 7 to 11 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 4 at Station 51, 99 E. 16th St.

The Pancake Breakfast is \$7 for adults and \$5 for kids under 12.

Tickets are available at all City fire stations.

There will be rescue demonstrations, displays of firefighting apparatus and a public education trailer. Tours of the station also will be available to the public.

A motorcycle "Poker Run" will also be held.

For information, call 385-6830.

Great Lakes scheduled for landing

Great Lakes Airlines is scheduled to begin flights from Merced Airport on Sept. 8.

The flights will land at Ontario Airport in Southern California.

Ontario Airport is approximately 35 miles from downtown Los Angeles and

close to Disneyland.

Passengers also can connect with flights offered by Aero Mexico, American, Continental, Delta, jetBlue, Southwest and United.

The airline will be flying 19-passenger planes. For more information, go to www.flygreatlakes.com.

Save a stamp, pay bill online

The City's online utility bill paying system has been revamped to make it easier to use.

The new system allows customers to pay easily and safely using a credit card. Customers also can set up an account so that their bill is deducted from their bank

account on a monthly basis. There is no fee for paying your bills online.

The City will continue to accept payments by mail or at the front counter.

On our homepage click on *I want to* "Pay my Bill Online" or just go to payments.cityofmerced.org.

Fire Prevention Week is a safety reminder for all

Every year Fire Prevention Week rolls around, and there are some people who just won't listen.

Every year fires take a terrible toll on America, with 2,600 people killed in fires, and nearly 400,000 blazes.

The Merced Fire Department responded to 106 fires last year that caused \$3.2 million in damages.

Fire Prevention Week is a good reminder for everyone to eliminate fire hazards in the

home, develop or review your home fire escape plan and practice fire safety.

The theme of Fire Prevention Week, Oct. 5 -11, is "Prevent Home Fires." The kitchen is the site of 40 percent of all home fires and most of those occur while cooking. Never let food cook unattended.

Smoke detectors save countless lives every year, so be sure to test all of your home alarms, and make sure the batteries are changed on a regular basis.