

Merced Center construction beginning this winter

Downtown block is site of three different projects

The empty block of land across from the Merced Civic Center will become a bustling hub of construction activity this winter.

Three major construction projects are planned for the block: an eco-friendly hotel, the Merced College's downtown classroom and office building and a parking garage and retail store complex.

Construction on the parking structure is scheduled to begin in January, weather permitting. The three deck parking garage will have parking spaces for 335 vehicles.

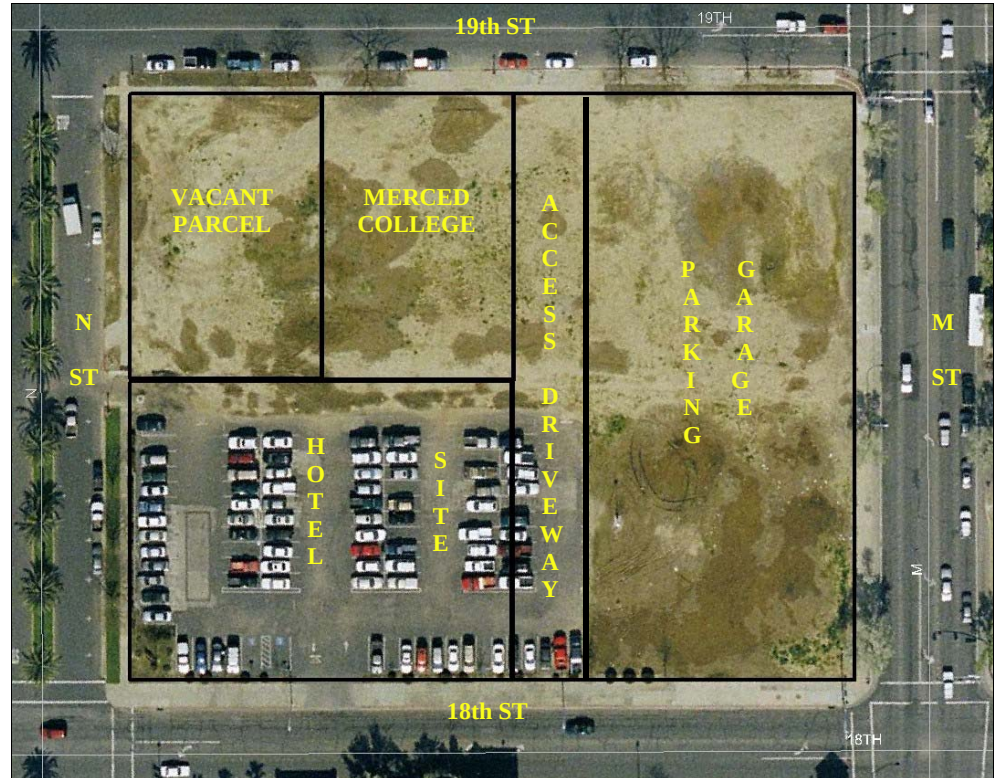
The Merced Redevelopment Agency project has 10,180 square feet of retail space on the ground floor and will eliminate a blighted area.

Among the design features to help make the structure an eye-pleasing addition to the downtown will be antique streetlights, a sidewalk with brick paver accents and new street trees.

Merced College is building an \$11 million center downtown that will have 11 classrooms, 10 offices, a resource library and large conference facilities that can be used by area businesses.

Programs housed in the 17,060-square foot building include the Center for International Trade, Computers in Business and the Employer Focused Training Center.

Wen Chang, a South San Francisco-based developer, plans to start construction on the



The Merced Center site, showing the hotel, garage and Merced College building.

hotel this spring.

The hotel would become a prominent landmark in the downtown, and not just because of the koi pond in the lobby, the waterfall or the rooftop gardens.

The five-story structure would be a "green hotel" with a number of features that will increase its energy efficiency. Chang already

has built one green hotel in American Canyon in the Napa Valley.

The business-class hotel would have 140 rooms. The cost is estimated to be approximately \$16.7 million.

One parcel of land remains vacant on the block and City officials expect it will be used for offices.



An artist's rendering of the parking garage that will be built on M Street between 18th and 19th streets. Retail space will occupy the ground floor facing M Street.

Holiday schedules

The City of Merced offices will be closed in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Monday, Jan. 15. City offices will also be closed Presidents Day, Monday, Feb. 19.

City residential refuse collection will not be affected by the holidays. However, the City Council meetings normally scheduled for those two days will be held the day after the holiday.

The City of Merced's Leaf Collection Service ends Jan. 24.

The City Council

Mayor Ellie Wooten
Mayor Pro Tem Joe Cortez
Councilmember Michele Gabriault-Acosta
Councilmember Rick Osorio
Councilmember Carl Pollard
Councilmember Jim Sanders
Councilmember Bill Spriggs

Contacting us

The City of Merced wants the site www.cityofmerced.org to be a one-stop source for information on the City. It contains City Council agendas and minutes, the Municipal Code, the General Plan, news releases, department listings, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, information on officials and an online survey.

To contact the Newsletter, e-mail newsletter@CityofMerced.org, call the Public Information Office at 385-6232 or write to Newsletter at the address below.

Merced Civic Center
678 W. 18th St.
Merced CA 95340
Open Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-5 p.m.,
except holidays

City Council	385-6834
City Manager	385-6834
City Attorney	385-6868
Code Enforcement.....	385-6855
Finance	385-4718
Inspection Services	385-6861
Personnel	385-6839
Planning Department.....	385-6858
Public Works (7:30-4:30) ...	385-6800
Recreation/Parks	385-6855

IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 911

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

Connectivity was key to naming City newsletter

Aurora Espinosa is the winner of the Name-the-Newsletter Contest, after submitting the name "City Connection."

"I appreciate the first issue and feel it is a great way to stay 'connected' to what is happening in the City of Merced," she wrote in an e-mail with her entry.

The contest drew 479 submissions from 175 people. She was the first person to

submit the name, City Connection, although six others came up with that name or close variations.

She has been invited to a City Council meeting to be introduced to the public, meet the Council and collect her prizes.

The City Council decided to keep the Web address in the newsletter name, along with the name Espinosa submitted.

City Council names parks and facilities

In December, the City Council selected names for 10 new parks and buildings across the City. Local residents submitted the names and a committee reviewed the names before making recommendations to the Council.

The park sites are in various stages of development. The names and locations are:

Dwight Amey Park: 7 acres, on Blux Avenue and Albert Drive in southeast Merced, for a civic leader and former council member.

Rudolph Joseph Merino Park: 8 acres, on Pacific and El Redondo drives in northwest Merced, for a former council member.

Richard Bernasconi Park: 8 acres, east of McKee Road and south of Yosemite Avenue in northeast Merced, the City's first elected mayor.

Merced Community Dog Park: 7 acres at R Street and Yosemite Avenue in northeast Merced. The committee noted it would be easy to locate because the description is its name.

Applegate Community Park Zoo Educational Building: At Applegate Park Zoo, R and 25th streets in central Merced, after



Gladys Escolá, a longtime Applegate Zoo volunteer, recently had the gift shop named after her.

Aleta M. Rossoti, a friend of animals who left part of her estate to the zoo. The Gift Shop Building was dedicated to Gladys Escolá, a longtime zoo volunteer.

Professor Charles Ogletree Park: 3.9 acres at Mandeville Way and Barrows Way in northeast Merced, after a Merced native who teaches law at Harvard.

Lester K. Yoshida Park: 3 acres at Bancroft and Arrow Wood drives in northeast Merced, after a former council member and business leader.

Elmer Murchie Park: 3.5 acres at Revell Drive and Bixby Way in northeast Merced, after a longtime resident who planted the eucalyptus grove on M Street.

Alfarata Ranch Park: 5 acres at 3076 E. Childs Ave. next to Pioneer School, after the name of the ranch located in the area.

Charter review to begin

The review of the Municipal Charter is expected to begin in January. The Charter has been amended eight times, but it has never undergone a full update since it was adopted in 1949.

The City Council created the Municipal Charter Review and Update Citizens Advisory Committee to provide comments and advice on charter changes. The nine-member committee was to be selected in January. Meetings are public and will be announced on the City Web site, www.CityofMerced.org and through the local media. For information, call 385-6866.

The Council must vote to put the Charter changes on the ballot and any changes must be approved by the voters.

Utility rates rise in February

The bills for City of Merced water and sewer customers will be larger next month. Residential sewer rates are \$26.95 a month as of Feb. 1, 2007 and flat residential water rates will be \$24.92.

The City Council approved the rate increase in December to pay for the rising costs of operations. In the case of sewer rates, much of the increase will be used to upgrade the wastewater treatment plant. New federal and state laws require that the City provide tertiary treatment of the wastewater and also eliminate the drying beds for sludge.

A plant expansion project will be paid for by new users through an increase in connection fees.