

## Undercrossing, other projects down the road

The G Street Railroad Undercrossing project is scheduled to begin by early summer.

The \$18 million project will create a four-lane road that will go under the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe tracks. Drivers on G Street will no longer be able to blame a stopped train for making them late for work.

During the approximately 18 months of construction, G Street will be closed to through traffic. Drivers will be redirected around the affected neighborhood and crosstown traffic will be instructed to use R and M Streets, Highway 59 and McKee Road.

The City will be publishing maps showing the affected areas and suggesting other ways around the City. Additional public information campaigns will be launched to make it an easier drive through town.

### **THAT'S NOT ALL**

The City has other major road projects that will begin soon.

Streets in Central Merced, primarily portions of 16th and G Streets will be resurfaced using



An artist's rendering of the completed G Street Undercrossing at the BNSF tracks.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Funds (ARRA). The \$1.1 million project will give drivers a smoother ride through the City.

The City just purchased the last piece of property needed to install a four-way intersection at Highway 59 and Cooper Avenue. This project will install traffic signals at an intersection that gets gridlocked at certain times of the day.

The new intersection will make it easier for Safeway and World Color employees and other people working in the Western Industrial Park to enter onto Highway 59. The wait can sometimes reach 20 minutes.

The start of the project is pending final state approval.

Another project that will get underway shortly is the South Merced Sidewalk Improvement Project. The City received

\$192,903 in federal stimulus HUD funds.

That money will be spent installing 58 ADA accessible ramps at intersections, 4,000 square feet of sidewalk along Lopes and West Avenues, 1,336 square feet of asphalt and 890 feet of reconstructed curbs and gutters.

It also will improve access to Tenaya Middle School and Golden Valley Health Center.

## Take advantage of the Enterprise Zone in the City

The Merced Regional Enterprise Zone is a way that businesses can turn a bigger profit in these lean economic times.

Participating businesses can get state tax credits for hiring employees and buying new equipment.

All businesses located in the new Merced Regional Enterprise Zone can take full advantage of six valuable state tax incentives:

\* Hiring Credit

- \* Sales & Use Tax Credits
- \* Business Expense Deduction
- \* Net Operating Loss Carryover
- \* Net Interest Deduction for Lenders
- \* Preference on Government Contracts

Businesses can earn up to \$37,440 in state tax credit for each qualified employee hired.

Businesses may defer 40 percent of the costs of qualified property as a business expense in

the first year the property is placed in service.

Companies located in the Enterprise Zone can earn preference points on various state contracts.

Business located in the Enterprise Zone may reduce state income taxes on certain machinery purchased for exclusive use within the Enterprise Zone.

In order to take advantage of the program, businesses must

meet certain criteria.

Most businesses in the City of Merced are located within the Zone.

To find out if your business is in the Enterprise Zone, and more about how to apply to receive these incentives, go to: [www.MercedRegionalEZ.com](http://www.MercedRegionalEZ.com).

For more information on the Enterprise Zone within the City of Merced contact Frank Quintero at 385-6827.

## 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](mailto: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](http://www.CityofMerced.org).

## Contacting us

The Web site, [www.CityofMerced.org](http://www.CityofMerced.org), contains City Council information, the Municipal Code, General Plan and other information. Contact the Newsletter at [newsletter@CityofMerced.org](mailto: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
Parks/CommServices .....	385-6855

## IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 911

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

## Ask the City: Big headache buying snake habitat

*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.*



**Why in the heck is the City spending \$300,000 on snake habitat? Why do we need to do that when we have all of these other needs in the City? Comments heard about town, in the blogs and Letters to the Editor.**

*Mike Wegley, the City's Director of Water Resources and Reclamation recently explained the situation:*

The City did not want to spend \$388,125 to buy habitat for the giant garter snake,

A U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service picture of the giant garter snake (*Thamnophis gigas*) that is listed as an endangered species.

but we had no choice.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would not sign off on the wastewater treatment plant expansion unless we helped protect the giant garter snake. Our choices: create the refuge near the facility – and accept the unlimited costs of running it

forever – or buy conservation credits in Yolo County.

In the end, it was cheaper to buy the credits. The facility needed to be built on time, and we did not want to get into the giant garter snake refuge business and deal with those on-going costs.

We never could have used the \$318,125 to fund police or fire operations. The expansion is being paid for by ratepayers -- the users of our plant -- not taxpayers. Under Proposition 218 approved by the voters in 1996, ratepayer money can only be used on wastewater treatment plant operations, maintenance and expansion.

We would have rather invested the \$388,125 in the plant expansion, but we are prevented from using it for other purposes like police.

## Get counted in the Census

The form for the 2010 U.S. Census should be arriving in the mail this month. Be sure to fill out the form and return it because it helps determine how much federal funding is received by the City.

If you and your family are not counted, the money goes elsewhere. Information on the form cannot be shared with other government agencies.

## Homelessness Committee

The Citizen's Advisory Committee on Homelessness will hold three meetings this month to discuss homeless campgrounds.

\* March 3, 6 p.m. Newbold Room, County Office of Education, 632 W. 13th. St.

\* March 17 and 29, 6 p.m. Sam Pipes Room, Merced Civic Center, 678 W. 18th.

Final report goes to City Council April 5, 7 p.m., Council Chambers.

## Think Green

### City getting audited — for energy efficiency

The City of Merced has hired a consultant to conduct an in-depth energy audit of City operations.

In an effort to reduce utility costs and save energy, Siemens Building Technologies was hired to do a detailed energy audit to identify potential renewable energy, energy conservation and water conservation projects.

The goal is to reduce the City's carbon footprint, explore renewable energies and also save money.

The audit will target and help the City implement capital improvements that would result in energy and resource savings.

Siemens staff started the audit Feb 8, and it is expected to take three to four months.

The firm will visit the different sites of City operations intermittently, leaving sensors to track energy consumption and monitor usage.

After the audit is completed, Siemens will present a plan to the City with several options that will reduce energy consumption.

The City received a \$749,000 Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant that will be used to implement the necessary energy efficiency upgrades.