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## Council novice ready for challenge

By Cheryl Winkelman, STAFF WRITER  
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LATHROP — Residents already are stopping new Councilwoman Felicia Cherry to chat and voice their concerns, even on Christmas Eve.

But Cherry said she doesn't mind.

"It's so important to be available and to be approachable," she said.

Cherry, 46, an employer service specialist for San Joaquin County, was elected to the council in November in an uncontested race. She will serve a four-year term.

On the night before Christmas, residents noticed the Save Mart Supermarket on the city's east side was closed and asked about possible future amenities, Cherry said. They said the city was growing lopsided.

"I hear it all the time," she said. "(That) everything's going in on the west side."

Growth is, in fact, a big issue, Cherry said. So far, she said, it has been managed well.

What needs to be maintained is a balancing act between giving new residents more services and keeping longtime residents comfortable with the changes.

"I know there's a lot of concern that (Lathrop) is growing too fast," she said.

To that end, old-timers must be made to feel Lathrop is not losing its small-town feel, Cherry added.

Aside from growth, Cherry said her priorities include providing more intra-city transportation and activities for young people.

"I don't think Lathrop is a bad town. I don't think Lathrop has a gang problem" but too much idle time can lead to problems, she said.

Cherry has witnessed this firsthand while serving on the Youth Accountability Board, which diverts first-time, low-level juvenile offenders from probation and court and into community service. She said the positive experience has "recharged her batteries."

Cherry said she decided to run for the City Council because "I just wanted to be part of the changes going on in Lathrop (and) city government is the last frontier that regular folks can get involved with."

Sworn in Dec. 5, she already has helped to make important decisions, including appointing elementary school teacher Martha Salcedo to the council.

Cherry has been doing her homework by reading her bulky agenda packets and says she looks forward to being part of an effective City Council team.

"We won't always be on the same page, but if we keep the people at the forefront of our head, it's going to be okay," she said.

To contact Cheryl Winkelman, call (209) 832-6144 or [cwinkelman@angnewspapers.com](mailto:cwinkelman@angnewspapers.com).