

City of Riverside, California Legislative Platform

Introduction

The City of Riverside, named for its location beside the Santa Ana River, is the most populous city in Inland Southern California and 12th-most populous city in California. Known as the City of Arts & Innovation, Riverside is home to the Mission Inn, the Fox Performing Arts Center, the California Citrus State Historic Park, University of California Riverside, and the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art and Culture.

Riverside is a full-service city with municipal water and power utilities, police and fire services, an airport, numerous museums, recreational facilities and other high quality municipal programs and services. As a full-service city, Riverside recognizes the need for active legislative engagement and continued partnership with the delegation at the local, state, and federal levels to protect and enhance the interests of its residents and businesses.

Accordingly, based on principles of fiscal responsibility, preservation of local control, and efficient service delivery and operations, the City of Riverside City Council provides overall policy guidance by adopting a legislative platform every two years.

The Legislative Platform (Platform) is developed in consultation with the City Council, Mayor, and City departments, to highlight Riverside's legislative priorities and to codify the City's positions on legislation, regulatory proposals, and funding opportunities. The Platform describes the City's goals on various policy matters as well as specific approaches it would support or oppose to achieve those policy goals.

The Platform, developed in uniformity with the City's Envision Riverside 2025 Strategic Plan, intends to supplement the Citywide Strategic Plan while building an efficient and flexible legislative advocacy strategy. The Platform provides strategic direction to City officials, staff and the City's legislative advocates, allowing the City to effectively take positions on policy issues that affect City operations.

City Specific Priorities

The City specific priorities, listed in alphabetical order, are focused on protecting the interests of the community and identifying resources available to enhance City programs and services.

Address Homelessness and Housing – There is a shortage of housing units that low-income people can afford and as the gap between income and housing costs grows, more people face homelessness. Homelessness is a persistent problem that impacts communities throughout the City of Riverside. According to the 2022 Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey, the City of Riverside comprise the highest number of homeless persons of any city in Riverside County (924). Of the 924 persons experiencing homeless, 514 of those people were unsheltered homeless residents. Despite taking a Housing First approach, homelessness continues to be prevalent across the City.

The City will work with lawmakers, statewide associations, local agencies and other stakeholders to advocate for legislation, budget actions, or administrative proposals that increase housing production and affordability, identify funding opportunities to address homelessness, increase shelter beds and services, and expand public awareness about homelessness and housing.

Expand Recreational Opportunities – The City of Riverside has 59 parks totaling 2,591.56 acres of developed parkland. There are an additional nine (9) parks that are undeveloped totaling 349.05 acres. Parks within the system include pocket parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, regional parks, wilderness parks, joint use and special use facilities. Across the various park types there are numerous recreational opportunities including sports fields, playgrounds, hiking trails and other recreational amenities.

The City will work with lawmakers, statewide associations, local agencies and other stakeholders to advocate for legislation, budget actions, or administrative proposals that increase park lands, expand adaptive and therapeutic recreation, and increase access and prioritize additional investments and improvements in the City's parks.

Increase Behavioral Health Infrastructure – Behavioral health, which includes mental health and substance use conditions, is an important part of the City of Riverside residents' overall health and well-being. Residents in Riverside and across the state report significant need for increased access to behavioral/mental health services. As the City is not a direct behavioral/mental health service provider, we rely on our regional partners (County, regional behavioral health center, community health workers, and more) to collaborate and implement programs needed by our residents. Cities and counties are on the frontlines of the state's behavioral health crisis and the supply of inpatient beds and behavioral/mental health services is not meeting the state's needs.

The City will work with lawmakers, statewide associations, local agencies and other stakeholders to advocate for legislation, budget actions, or administrative proposals that advance CARE Court, expand behavioral/mental health services, provide funding to build/retrofit acute psychiatric care facilities, increase the number of inpatient beds, expand access to community-based treatment, reduce homelessness, incarceration, and unnecessary hospitalizations, reduce barriers to care, and improve outcomes for people with behavioral and mental health conditions.

Revitalize the Santa Ana River – The Santa Ana River flows along the City of Riverside for 11 miles. Numerous development opportunities exist along the river, however barriers such as fire risks, invasive species, illegal habitations within the river bottom, safety concerns, and a lack of amenities, make improving the river a challenge.

The City will work with lawmakers, statewide associations, local agencies and other stakeholders to advocate for legislation, budget actions, or administrative proposals that identify opportunities for development along the Santa Ana River and create more recreational activities while preserving natural areas.

Underground the Riverside Transmission Reliability Project – The City of Riverside is the only city of its size in Southern California to have only one connection to the statewide electricity grid. This is concerning as the effects of climate change and increasing demand for power during extreme weather conditions and events make the power grid susceptible to a series of failures. Prolonged periods without power put the safety and well-being of our residents at risk of health complications and even death. The Riverside Transmission Reliability Project (RTRP) is a new 230 kV transmission line situated in Riverside County that will provide a critical second connection to the statewide power grid. RTRP is currently approved primarily as an above ground project, however due to variables such as fire risk mitigation, social justice, and environmental aesthetics, Riverside seeks to underground the transmission line within the City's jurisdiction.

The City will work with lawmakers, statewide associations, local agencies and other stakeholders to advocate for legislation, budget actions, or administrative proposals that provide funding and regulatory approval of undergrounding the Riverside Transmission Reliability Project.

State Legislative Priorities

The State priorities are driven by the City's core values of advancing diversity, equity and inclusion; furthering community trust; preserving local control over finances and decision-making; promoting innovation; and ensuring the City's long-term sustainability and resilience in the face of growing environmental, economic, and health and public safety challenges.

- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that promote diversity and address equity and inclusion to ensure effective and equitable policy implementation.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that increase transparency in local government and promote community engagement.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that enhance City services, protect local revenue sources and preserve local flexibility in the administration of programs and services.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that provide an equitable distribution of resources.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that promote collaboration between and among Riverside's higher education and training providers to increase alignment with business needs.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that prioritize a prosperous business climate.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that continue to boost recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Federal Legislative Priorities

The Federal priorities are centered on the belief that Federal policies should enhance the ability of local elected officials to respond to the needs of their constituents. Cities rely on the Federal government to help build infrastructure, support economic development, deliver human services, and ensure public safety.

- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that provide flexible, ongoing and sustainable funding to help cities finance basic infrastructure needs such as drinking water and wastewater.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that provide expanded recreation, conservation, and educational opportunities for the local community.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that enhance municipal efforts to provide essential transportation systems and emphasize maintenance, preservation and equitable distribution of transportation funding.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that promote economic resilience, and the advancement of a skilled workforce to meet business needs.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that develop, coordinate and expand direct producer-to-consumer markets and increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products.

- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that allow the City to pursue new and established resources for a variety of housing options, such as affordable housing, permanent supportive housing, and bridge housing.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that provide additional funding to expand programs that provide behavioral and mental health services for the City's homeless population.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that continue funding for the wide variety of Department of Justice grants, Department of Homeland Security grants and other security-specific grants.
- Support legislation, budget actions or administrative proposals that address racial equity, enhance transparency, and increase public trust in law enforcement.

Legislative Positions and Policy Statements

The Legislative Positions and Policy Statements provide general policy direction when developing a position on pending legislation and are broken into areas of arts, culture and recreation, community well-being, economic opportunity, environmental stewardship, high performing government, and infrastructure, mobility and connectivity.

1. Arts, Culture and Recreation

Promote diverse community experiences, enhance cultural enrichment and advance personal development opportunities that add to the quality of life of residents and visitors. Riverside supports legislation, proposals and resources that:

1.1. Arts

- 1.1.1. Enhance and improve responsible stewardship of the arts in Riverside.
- 1.1.2. Aid in the historic preservation of Riverside.
- 1.1.3. Prioritize arts, culture, and heritage to encourage creativity and draw visitors to Riverside.
- 1.1.4. Develop, enhance and sustain artistic and cultural programs.
- 1.1.5. Provide greater opportunities to access meaningful experiences in the arts.

1.2. Culture

- 1.2.1. Expand the Sister City program to promote peace and prosperity through people-to-people relationships.
- 1.2.2. Provide residents and visitors with access to City facilities that promote cultural enrichments.
- 1.2.3. Enhance funding for museums and library systems such as the Museum of Riverside and the Eastside Library.

1.3. Recreation

- 1.3.1. Preserve and protect the conservation of the City's natural and historic land resources.
- 1.3.2. Support development of the River District along the Santa Ana River.
- 1.3.3. Ensure equitable opportunities to access parks, lakes, forests, mountain ranges, and other natural landscapes.
- 1.3.4. Expand adaptive and therapeutic recreation programs at City parks and facilities.

- 1.3.5. Address deferred maintenance and capital improvement projects for City parks and facilities.

2. Community Well-Being

Encourage whole person health, promote equity and safety, and strengthen communities through preparedness and resiliency so individuals and communities can flourish and fulfill their potential. Riverside supports legislation, proposals and resources that:

2.1. Health and Wellness

- 2.1.1. Promote and address diversity, equity and inclusion issues.
- 2.1.2. Address and dismantle institutional and systemic racism that include but are not limited to health equity, housing, education, access to capital, environmental restoration and criminal justice reform.
- 2.1.3. Address the social determinants of health and promote whole person care.
- 2.1.4. Expand and create better access to mental health and behavioral health resources.
- 2.1.5. Invest in education funding for professionals to enter the mental health and behavioral health fields.
- 2.1.6. Provide and sustain quality education and childcare for all.
- 2.1.7. Boost medical reimbursement payments and ensure an equitable distribution of funding to the Inland Southern California region.
- 2.1.8. Promote the expansion of medical facilities in the Inland Southern California region.
- 2.1.9. Allow cities to establish public health departments to address the unique needs of locales more effectively.

2.2. Public Safety

- 2.2.1. Allow flexible use of funds for regional fire prevention activities.
- 2.2.2. Enhance Urban Search and Rescue California Task Force 6.
- 2.2.3. Combat fentanyl and other synthetic drug overdose issues.
- 2.2.4. Reduce violent crime and promote safer communities.
- 2.2.5. Expand laws and regulations on vandalism and graffiti to hold violators accountable, while supporting and enhancing programs that allow individuals to clear their record upon completion of community service.
- 2.2.6. Appropriately penalize catalytic converter theft.
- 2.2.7. Provide local government with the necessary tools to effectively serve AB 109, Proposition 47 and Proposition 57 populations.

2.3. Housing & Homelessness

- 2.3.1. Create, preserve and expand affordable housing funding options.
- 2.3.2. Provide affordable housing, permanent supportive housing and bridge housing.
- 2.3.3. Aid low-income community members in achieving housing stability and pathways to homeownership.
- 2.3.4. Expand programs that provide mental health services for those experiencing homelessness.
- 2.3.5. Assist people experiencing homelessness with recovery-supported housing.
- 2.3.6. Assist cities with homeless encampment cleanup and related damage to the built and natural environments.

3. Economic Opportunity

Stimulate economic growth by promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. Riverside supports legislation, proposals and resources that:

3.1. Economy

- 3.1.1. Equitably distribute state funding for state mandated programs.
- 3.1.2. Continue to assist small and medium size businesses in recovering from COVID-19 impacts.
- 3.1.3. Leverage the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and other partners to create a clean and green tech economy.
- 3.1.4. Increase the number and capacity of local farmers and increase productive acreage.
- 3.1.5. Expand agricultural development of the greenbelt and across the City.
- 3.1.6. Incentivize businesses to invest in Riverside.

3.2. Workforce

- 3.2.1. Strengthen vocation and life skill focused curriculum in public K-12 education.
- 3.2.2. Create jobs in the green transportation and green technology industries.
- 3.2.3. Increase the number, rate and diversity of undergraduates in STEM disciplines.
- 3.2.4. Promote and expand mentorship and internship programs.
- 3.2.5. Provide funding for a region-wide employer engagement model that supports talent development and retention for high-growth middle skilled jobs.

4. Environmental Stewardship

Maximize sustainability initiatives that further economic prosperity, environmental protection, and social well-being while decreasing negative impacts on the environment. Riverside supports legislation, proposals and resources that:

4.1. Sustainability

- 4.1.1. Ensure safe, reliable and affordable water and energy for all residents.
- 4.1.2. Expand and improve Riverside's connection to the statewide grid system.
- 4.1.3. Encourage the revitalization of environmentally impaired and older communities.
- 4.1.4. Support the implementation of a long-term water use efficiency framework that both improves water supply reliability and reduces water demands.
- 4.1.5. Protect and enhance the Santa Ana River and other open spaces.
- 4.1.6. Allow for the development of a new Urban Forest Management Plan that better addresses environmental concerns while providing a mechanism to reduce the devastation caused by California fires.

4.2. Renewable Energy

- 4.2.1. Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, expand renewable energy usage and assist with greening the City's fleets and facilities.
- 4.2.2. Increase the availability and accessibility of zero and low-emissions vehicles as well as charging infrastructure for all.
- 4.2.3. Delay penalties for local agencies and commercial operators seeking to comply with SB 1383 (Lara, 2016) regulations.
- 4.2.4. Broaden the definitions for renewable portfolio standard (RPS) generation sources.

- 4.2.5. Develop equitable renewable identification number (RIN) credit value for renewable natural gas (RNG) produced from landfill diverted organics.
- 4.2.6. Allow for flexibility in the procurement of renewable resources.

5. High Performing Government

Pursue policy, service and administration excellence and reform that ensure the financial health of the City and leverage public tax dollars for maximum local benefit. Riverside supports legislation, proposals and resources that:

5.1. Home Rule Authority

- 5.1.1. Remove unwarranted, State-imposed mandates or barriers in the execution of local government programs.
- 5.1.2. Expand the City's autonomy and flexibility in dealing with the financing of public services.

5.2. Fiscal

- 5.2.1. Strengthen and expand ongoing revenues for the City.
- 5.2.2. Provide sufficient financial resources from the state government to implement mandates without duplicating efforts.
- 5.2.3. Update the cost recovery mechanism for California Public Records Act requirements.
- 5.2.4. Allow the City to be a direct recipient of state funding.
- 5.2.5. Provide sufficient resources to implement the least costly and most efficient regulations.
- 5.2.6. Streamline the process for State reimbursement of State imposed mandates.

6. Infrastructure, Mobility, Connectivity

Mitigate the negative impacts of goods movement on the Inland Southern California region, enhance multi-modal transportation, and create roadways and related infrastructure that provide safe travel for all users. Riverside supports legislation, proposals and resources that:

6.1. Infrastructure

- 6.1.1. Encourage infrastructure development that protects the air, water, and lands of the City.
- 6.1.2. Address the structural imbalance in transportation funding.
- 6.1.3. Advance the Riverside Transmission Reliability Project (RTRP) and increase energy efficiency.
- 6.1.4. Provide funding for water and wastewater service providers and biosolids producers to address PFAS and other contaminants of emerging concern.

6.2. Mobility

- 6.2.1. Alleviate commuter congestion to promote economic development and enhance citizens' quality of life.
- 6.2.2. Promote the expansion of public transportation services and reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- 6.2.3. Allow greater flexibility and expand the use of SB 1 (Beall, 2017) funds.
- 6.2.4. Allow local agencies more flexibility in the establishment of enforceable speed zones.

- 6.2.5. Expand State resources to facilitate infrastructure supporting connected and autonomous vehicles.

6.3. Connectivity

- 6.3.1. Encourage private sector investments to develop state-of-the-art broadband capabilities for businesses and residents.
- 6.3.2. Provide financial incentives that create a more equitable provision of broadband internet to communities that lack access.
- 6.3.3. Include broadband as a Lifeline Program to assist low-income families with obtaining internet service.