



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD DATE: JULY 22, 2026

FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT WARDS: ALL

SUBJECT: DIRECTOR'S UPDATE REGARDING CITY MANAGEMENT, THE MAIN MUSEUM RENOVATION, HISTORIC HOUSES, COLLECTIONS, EXHIBITIONS AND PROGRAMS, BUDGET, STAFFING, ADVISORY TEAMS, VOLUNTEER AND SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, ADVOCACY, STRATEGIC PLAN, AND SCHEDULED BOARD MEETINGS

ISSUE:

Receive and file the Director's Update regarding the City management, main museum renovation, historic houses, collections, exhibitions and programs, budget, staffing, advisory teams, volunteer and support opportunities, marketing and communications, advocacy, strategic plan, and scheduled Board meetings.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum of Riverside Board receives and files the Director's Update regarding City management, the main museum renovation, historic houses, collections, exhibitions and programs, budget, staffing, advisory teams, volunteer and support opportunities, marketing and communications, advocacy, strategic plan, and scheduled Board meetings.

DISCUSSION:

City Management

The recent changes in the City Manager's office have not resulted in changes to the Museum's day-to-day operations, nor are serious changes expected. Museum staff will continue to pursue capital projects and all regular programmatic goals and adjust to forthcoming staff changes.

Main Museum Renovation

Onsite work continues, including weekly meetings with the contractors. Steel is going up. The Hard hat tours were offered for senior City staff and the Mayor and her staff.

Staff continue to prepare for the "topping out" ceremony in late summer, the grand reopening plans, and sourcing furnishings and equipment that are the staff's responsibility to acquire.

Historic Houses

The delay caused by the need for additional soils work as well as the protracted process to amend the architects' agreement have caused pressure on an already tight schedule for Harada

House. The state grant has an expiration date, and any delay has negative impact. Staff expect the 100% construction documents by the time of this meeting. We will then expedite review and plan-check so we can move quickly to bidding and start of construction.

It remains true that staff will organize a public engagement session at Harada House just prior to construction to orient neighbors, donors, and others to the plans, but we cannot schedule that until we are certain that site work is imminent. This session will be similar to the Open Lobby events that we held for the main Museum, including the architects and other stakeholders.

Heritage House closed for the season on June 28, 2026. Small site improvement projects are under way, as we always try to make good use of the time the site is closed.

Collections

You will continue to see accession recommendations coming forward as Collections Registrar Katie Grim identifies “FIC” (“found in collections”) artifacts. As noted in the previous director’s report, these are objects in limbo regarding status. Each item or lot of items require examination and preparation of a recommendation—starting with the Collections Committee—to begin the process to resolve their status.

Impressive progress is occurring to retroactively improve the documentation and housing of collections. For example, 100% of the founding collection (Rumsey, A1) now has digital records, and 99% of it is photo-documented. Of the 2,300 baskets and similar Indigenous resources in the Museum’s care, 90% are housed to standard, 90% have digital records, and 51% are photo-documented. The 1,500 Chamber of Commerce photographs are 100% housed to standard and 100% furnished with digital records. The extensive Harada family photographs are 35% photo-documented. These statistics are just samplings to indicate what we’re striving to accomplish, that is, all collections 100% housed to standard, equipped with digital records, and photo-documented. This progress is worth celebrating but does not provide a sense of the massive scope of this project, which is attempting to bring hundreds of thousands of objects and specimens to the point where we have complete physical and intellectual control, and can employ them in our exhibitions, programs, and publications more effectively.

Exhibitions and Programs

At Heritage House, *A Victorian Heritage: Riverside’s Butterfly Man* closed on June 28 after a successful run. It was Curator of Natural History Ian Wright’s first experience as a lead exhibition curator. On September 11, *Gilded: The Art of Heritage House* will open, curated by Robyn Peterson. Like many other highlight exhibitions in Heritage House, *Gilded* will center on artifacts already on view but perhaps under-appreciated. Each of the highlight exhibitions staff coordinates attempts to place artifacts in a fresh context or shed light on another dimension of Victorian history and experience.

The Museum continues to participate in Citywide programming honoring the country’s 250th anniversary. By the time of this meeting, both the special tours on July 5 and Trivia Night on July 7 will have occurred, but the chance for a summer Movies on the Lawn (*Yankee Doodle Dandy*, 1942) and fall programming are coming up. Please also attend our summer Nights with the Museum talks! We have two excellent programs lined up, one on Inland Empire Black history and the other presented by our main Museum architects.

Good and exciting progress is occurring in planning for the reopening exhibitions. If the grand reopening still seems far in the future, recall that we must complete the plans for the exhibitions down to the last detail in order to put a fabrication package out to bid for cases, gallery tech, graphics, and other elements. All texts and scripts must be translated (Spanish and ASL for the

videos), and choices must be made with regard to casework and temporary walls that will work long into the future, after the first round of exhibitions has closed.

Date	Program	Location	Volunteer opportunity?
July 23, 2026	Nights with the Museum, Jen Tilton and others will discuss local Black history, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.	Main Library Community Room	No
July 24, 2026	Movies on the Lawn for the 250 th , <i>Yankee Doodle Dandy</i> , gates open at 8:00 p.m.	Heritage House	No
August 6, 2026	Artswalk, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., lizards!	Main Street	Possibly
August 27, 2026	Nights with the Museum, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m., “Past, Present, and Future: Bridging Memory and Modernity at the Museum of Riverside – a talk by our main Museum architects Stephanie Kingsnorth and Melissa Boudreau	Main Library Community Room	No
September 25, 2026	EARLY NOTICE for Moon Festival, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Heritage House	Yes

Budget

City Council approved the City’s biennial budget for FYs 2026-2028. We will include a FYE summary of 2025-2026 in a future report. City revenue concerns remain, and staff will continue their ongoing efforts to be frugal with the funding available for our wide range of projects.

Staffing

Recruitment is under way for a new Curator of History. Staff expect to begin reviewing applications in mid- to late July.

Advisory Teams

Please contact Robyn Peterson if you have not yet signed up for an advisory team. Because the Immigration Community Advisory Team is closed, it is no longer listed below. It has also completed its initial meeting series but will be invited back for a special meeting or two soon, since the script for this exhibition is nearing completion.

Committee / Team	Meeting interval	Role	Chair	Next meeting
Collections	Every other second Wednesday	Advising on collections activity	Jennifer Dickerson	July 8, 2026
Harada House Project Team	Every other first Friday	Programs and communications regarding Harada House	Acting chair Robyn Peterson	August 7, 2026
Grand Reopening Steering Team (to evolve after 2027 into the Marketing Advisory Team)	Expect meetings to increase in frequency up to reopening	All aspects of reopening events, communications, PR, and website	Chantal Downing	Meeting approximately monthly
Programs	Every other first Wednesday	Program development, implementation, and coordination with partners	Jennifer Dickerson	September 2, 2026

Volunteer and Support Opportunities

We're happy to report that we have a strong cadre of volunteers at present and are working to match them up with behind-the-scenes, event, and program needs.

We encourage all Board members to go through the entire process to become City volunteers, if you have not already. Register with the City's volunteer management system

(<https://riversideca.cervistech.com>). **Please note:** talk to Museum Educator Teresa Woodard about available volunteer opportunities and create your profile on Cervis before proceeding to additional steps. This applies as well to those you may wish to recommend as new volunteers.

Marketing and Communications

Due in part to ongoing and widespread communications about our programs, the Museum was able to maintain its level of in-person program reach compared to the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Recall that additional programs in 2024, the Museum's 100th anniversary, helped boost 2024-2025 attendance to just a hair under 25,000. Digital reach was over 655,404. In-person attendance for FY 2025-2026 was almost identical even without the extra 100th anniversary programming. Our digital reach increased by an astonishing 63% to well over a million contacts. These are preliminary numbers awaiting confirmation, but the achievement is noteworthy for a small staff continuing to operate without its main site. It is a testament to the value and appeal of our programs as well as the effectiveness of recent marketing.

Improvements continue on the website. Please note that lead donors to the Harada House Campaign are now recognized. Recognition combines donor impact; that is, donors who support Harada House directly with gifts to the Museum or with gifts to the Riverside Museum Associates or Harada House Foundation will have their giving impact aggregated.

Advocacy

Please stay in touch with your Councilmember. Note as well that there is a new Councilmember for Ward 6: Luis Hernandez. Please note: Councilmembers' support staff change from time to time. Check their individual webpages to make appointments or share announcements. Please sign up for all seven Councilmembers' newsletters. This can be done individually through each of the Councilmembers' web pages: <https://riversideca.gov/council>.

Advocacy, knowledge of the Museum's programs, and participation are all key roles of Board members. Spreading the word about Museum programs is a tremendous help, as is attending them. Please let us know if you need flyers, links, or other assistance in order to share updates with others.

Strategic Plan

As anticipated, the City Council approved the Museum's new strategic plan at its June 23 meeting. The plan covers the five-year period beginning July 1, 2026. It was not altered from the version include in your April 22, 2026, Board packet.

Scheduled Board meetings

Regular meetings of the Museum of Riverside Board occur on the fourth Wednesdays at 3:00 p.m. The meeting schedule for the remainder of FY2026-2027 follows. *Please note that the holidays conflict with the regularly scheduled meeting times in the months of November and December and that a single special meeting is typically scheduled to take the place of these two meetings.*

A meeting cannot be held without a quorum of five (5) Board members. If a quorum is not achieved, Museum processes can be delayed. Early communication regarding whether you can

attend a meeting is greatly appreciated so that we can determine whether we will have a quorum.

August 26, 2026
September 23, 2026
October 28, 2026
* November 25, 2026
* December 23, 2026
January 27, 2027
February 24, 2027
March 24, 2027
April 28, 2027
May 26, 2027
June 23, 2027

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by: Robyn G. Peterson, Museum Director
Reviewed by: Ann Lovell, Manager of Operations