



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE: MARCH 26, 2025**

FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT **WARDS: ALL**

SUBJECT: DIRECTOR'S UPDATE REGARDING THE MAIN MUSEUM RENOVATION, HISTORIC HOUSES, COLLECTIONS, EXHIBITIONS AND PROGRAMS, BUDGET, STAFFING, ADVISORY TEAMS, VOLUNTEER AND SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES, AND MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

ISSUE:

Receive and file the Director's Update regarding the main museum renovation, historic houses, collections, exhibitions and programs, budget, staffing, advisory teams, volunteer and support opportunities, and marketing and communications.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum of Riverside Board receive and file the Director's Update regarding the main museum renovation, historic houses, collections, exhibitions and programs, budget, staffing, advisory teams, volunteer and support opportunities, and marketing and communications.

DISCUSSION:

Main Museum Renovation

Bids on the construction project from the three pre-qualified bidders were received on February 11, 2025. The responsive low bidder came in with a number that is within the Museum's budget for the project. At the time this report was written, staff anticipate having taken the bid to City Council March 25, 2025, or the day before the Museum Board meeting. At the pre-construction meeting with our new contractors, we will learn when a project schedule will be available.

Final tasks relating to clearing the downtown building include removal of a few bits and pieces, removal of refuse staff generated while vacating the building, and full photography of the empty building. It is anticipated that all of this will have been completed by the Museum Board meeting date.

Historic Houses

At the time of the preparation of this report, a new architectural design team for Harada House and the Harada House Interpretive Center has been selected but the processes of fee negotiation and agreement preparation remain under way. A formal announcement will be made when these

steps are completed. Similarly, a firm to be our Harada House project documentarian has also been selected, but several steps of the process remain before staff can make an announcement.

If you've driven by Harada House recently, you might have been startled to see a large scaffolding array with a "roof" over it to protect the structure from rain. This was the only available solution to the problem of not being able to re-tarp the roof as we had in the past. The situation is temporary until the construction project to make permanent fixes begins.

Regarding projects at Heritage House, the work to upgrade the site fencing is imminent. A project to design a package of wayfinding signage has been launched. Minor improvements to the carriage house office space are under consideration, and small projects are being pursued as staff time and funding permit. Larger projects that are at present unfunded include landscaping in front of the barn, pole lighting along the new pathways, and overhaul of the restrooms.

Collections

With all the collections at last moved from the downtown site, a large percentage of collections support time has been focused on rehousing objects and reorganizing the storage warehouses. Collections Registrar Katie Grim also works diligently to become current with processing the last few years' worth of accessions and deaccessions. Preparation of a workspace for an archivist to be hired soon is also a priority.

Exhibitions and Programs

Roaring Riverside: 1920s Fashion closed on February 16, 2025. It was a lovely little exhibition that many enjoyed. The current exhibition in Heritage House, *First Comes Love: Courtship in the Victorian Era*, opened on March 14 and will be on view through June 29, 2025. It was curated by Curator of History Taylor Bythewood-Porter. As with all the temporary exhibitions designed for Heritage House, please note that content is also designed for installation in the carriage house. You haven't seen the exhibitions until you've seen them entirely!

Staff continue to work with our contract exhibition designer, Riggs Ward Design, to develop the exhibitions that will reopen the main museum. The Community Advisory Team formed to assist with the immigration exhibition is a dynamic group of individuals who have met twice so far. The Museum continues to be grateful to the Riverside Museum Associates for underwriting the stipends for the five members of this team.

Show your support for all Museum programs by attending them, telling others about them, and sharing our posts announcing them. **Please note:** We asked you to save the date of April 5, 2025, for a special program featuring author Susan Straight and Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson, but this program has had to be postponed. We will let you know the new date as soon as it's set. In the meantime, the In/VISIBLE, Un/HEARD: Riverside's Civil Rights Stories program (returning for its third and last historic site tour) has claimed April 5, 2025, as its event date. All organizers are grateful to California Humanities for a grant that will support In/VISIBLE, Un/HEARD: Riverside's Civil Rights stories.

Note also that we will be back once again at Insect Fair on April 26, 2025, with our butterfly tents and other popular aspects of the event. Your volunteer help is welcome!

We've made a few changes to our program line-up for the year so please refer to the latest announcements you receive for the most accurate information.

Date	Program	Volunteer opportunity?
April 3, 2025	Artwalk, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., Main Street, native pollinators and plants	Yes
April 4, 2025	Nights with the Museum, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., Main Library Community Room, Fortino Morales III, “Upcoming Sustainability Initiatives with the City of Riverside”	No
April 5, 2025	In/VISIBLE, Un/HEARD: Riverside’s Civil Rights Stories – self-guided car tour to three sites, beginning at 10:00 a.m.	Yes
April 6, 2025	First Sunday, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m., Main Street and Mission Inn Avenue, Joseph Hart and his live reptiles	Maybe
April 11, 2025	Insect Rave at Heritage House, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Yes
April 26, 2025	Insect Fair behind the Main Library, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Definitely

Budget

The City is preparing for the second year in the current two-year budget cycle. The Museum is making the most of its budget in anticipation of possible belt-tightening next fiscal year.

Staffing

Recruitment for the new Exhibition Designer has been placed on pause after two unsuccessful rounds. We will try again next fiscal year.

Recruitment has begun for the new / renewed Archivist position.

Advisory Teams

The standing staff-level advisory teams are open to new members, who need not be Board members. An exception is the newly formed Community Advisory Team for the immigration exhibition, which is complete at five members.

Committee / Team	Meeting interval	Role	Chair	Next meeting
Collections	Every other second Wednesday	Advising on collections activity	Jennifer Dickerson	Next meeting May 14, 2025
Harada House Project Team	Every other first Friday	Programs and communications regarding Harada House	Taylor Bythewood-Porter	April 4, 2025
Branding and Marketing	Irregular – to revive in 2025	Public communications, PR, website	Chantal Downing	TBD
Programs	Every other first Wednesday	Program development, implementation, and coordination with partners	Jennifer Dickerson	May 7, 2025
Immigration exhibition Community Advisory Team	Intermittent beginning late January 2025	Advising during planning for the immigration exhibition, estimated to be two years	Robyn Peterson	May 29, 2025

Volunteer and Support Opportunities

A strong need for volunteers continues in these areas: event support, touring docents, behind-the-scenes with collections, marketing and social media support, and other areas. Please ask interested individuals you may encounter to start their inquiry with Teresa Woodard Belding, twoodard@riversideca.gov. A volunteer handbook has been written and is available to new and

currently active volunteers. The City has adopted new volunteer management software, intended to be more user-friendly than the prior system.

Marketing and Communications

Significant progress on the website is not expected until the Office of Communications recruits its new Web Developer to be shared by the Museum and the Library. As of the date this report was prepared, interviews had taken place, and the new recruit may be onboarded in or around April.

Chantal Downing is honing marketing and promotional effort on solidifying branding and presentation of our programs, as well as building relationships with outlets that align with our audiences such as *Raincross Gazette*, KVCR, and, less often, the *Riversider Magazine*. Social media continues to be key. When the new web developer allows our new website to go live, this outlet will be crucial for construction and program updates.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

The activities of the Museum of Riverside align with the Strategic Priority, “Arts, Culture and Recreation.” Specific programs and activities mentioned in this report support, in particular, goal 1.1 (strengthening Riverside’s portfolio of arts, culture, recreation, senior, and lifelong learning programs and amenities), goal 1.2 (enhancing equitable access to arts, culture, and recreational service offerings and facilities), and goal 1.5 (supporting programs and amenities to further develop literacy, health, and education of children, youth, and seniors throughout the community).

Museum programs further support the Strategic Priority, “Community Well-Being.” Specific goals supported by Museum programs and partnerships include goal 2.3, which includes strengthening neighborhood identities, and goal 2.5, which points to fostering relationships between community members and partner organizations.

1. **Community Trust** – The Director’s Report comprehensively familiarizes the Board with operating conditions, invites Board input, provides information on volunteer opportunities, and describes partnerships the Museum is pursuing. Progress on the Harada House main museum projects restore trust in the City’s commitment to open these important cultural resources for the public.
2. **Equity** – The Director’s Report describes the programs Museum staff and partners are implementing to celebrate and serve the full diversity of Riverside. Programs strive to emphasize equity and access. Marketing reaches into all neighborhoods. Community engagement efforts strive to reach a variety of demographic groups.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – The Director’s Report updates the board on ongoing efforts to operate within the Department’s budgets and apply a transparent and rigorous process when selecting contractors and expending resources. The Museum seeks non-City funding regularly and as practical. Museum budgets consistently run in the black, demonstrating responsible use of taxpayer dollars.
4. **Innovation** – The Director’s Report reports on the development of original, locally relevant programming, as well as methods to achieve programmatic ends through proactive cultural partnerships and efficient promotions. Projects designed to extend the Museum’s reach beyond its walls during the main museum closure employ innovative

techniques and designs.

5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – The Director's Report reflects staff emphasis on cultural sustainability. The Report includes efforts to streamline operations, preserve Museum assets, deliver value to the taxpayer, model and teach cultural and environmental preservation, and develop solidly researched and affirming interpretation.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by: Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director