



City of Arts & Innovation

Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE:** OCTOBER 25, 2023

FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT **WARDS:** ALL

SUBJECT: DIRECTOR'S UPDATE REGARDING THE MAIN MUSEUM RENOVATION, HISTORIC HOUSES, COLLECTIONS, EXHIBITIONS AND PROGRAMS, 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, 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, staffing, advisory teams, volunteer and support opportunities, and marketing and communications.

DISCUSSION:

Main Museum Renovation

The Museum's architects continue to work on construction drawings (CDs). Staff continue to meet often with the architects to settle questions that arise. Recent discussions have focused on the original construction of the historic structure, building systems, security cameras, finishes, and colors. More details are awaited regarding landscaping and lighting systems.

As noted last month, another "Open Lobby" event is scheduled for November 2, 2023, coinciding with Artswalk. Staff will open the historic lobby, share the nearly-complete renderings, and offer light refreshments. An opportunity to weigh in on potential names for a couple of the exhibit areas will also be included. The architects will be present to take questions.

Historic Houses

Progress has slowed on the Harada House campus projects while staff work through the process to secure Council approval for a change in the scope of work for the Harada House Interpretive Center. Independent peer reviews also continue as staff determine a path forward on the lifting up of Harada House that promises to be safe. Staff recently met with a historic wallpaper

specialist in anticipation of the steps that will need to be taken in the final phase to stabilize and recreate the existing crumbling wallpaper.

At Heritage House, the summer 2023 path resurfacing project is under way. As of the writing of this report, a reopening date for the house has not yet been set. An alternative “mini” Moon Festival took place on September 7, 2023, due to the need to cancel the regular event that had been scheduled for September 29, 2023. Mindful of the desire not to cancel any more programming than absolutely necessary, staff are in daily contact with the contractors.

Collections

Katie Grim and others continue to work to catch up with the current pace of accession and deaccession activity while making progress on rehousing, improving documentation, pulling objects slated for the 100th anniversary exhibition, overseeing conservation treatments, and responding to public requests for materials from the archives. With the arrival of the Museum’s new Curator of Natural History, Ian Wright, significant progress is expected both to continue removing collections from the downtown site and moving collections already at the collections warehouses but sitting on rolling racks into the newly-anchored cabinetry.

Exhibitions and Programs

Staff activity has centered on the 100th anniversary plans, which are exciting but very ambitious for the Museum’s small staff. Exhibition Designer Elise Burgos developed a beautiful design for *Dear Riverside*, the exhibition that will open at the Center for Social Justice & Civil Liberties with a reception on July 25, 2024. Ms. Burgos has also turned the 100 programs list into a charming calendar, which will begin to be distributed at Christmas Open House and on December 12, 2023 (the Museum’s 99th birthday), in front of the main museum. Board support of these programs will be greatly appreciated, even when that is no more demanding than being part of what we hope will be large audiences.

Nights with the Museum continues, as do First Sundays and Artswalk. On September 23, staff shared information about the Museum at an event organized by the Riverside Public Library.

Stop by the Arlington branch of the library to see the Museum’s new mini-museum *Fred Stebler of Riverside: Machinery Whiz*. This exhibition opened with a program on October 14, 2023.

The Museum substantially supported the coordination of a Constitution Day event on September 21, 2023, designed for high school students by the local branch of the American Board of Trial Advocates, the Asian Pacific American Lawyers of the Inland Empire, and a number of legal firms. The Riverside Museum Associates is also warmly thanked for underwriting busing costs for students to attend this program that highlighted the Harada legal case and included a partial reenactment of the trial. A promised recording of this event will be shared when it’s available.

Show your support for Museum programs by attending them!

Date	Program	Volunteer opportunity?
November 2, 2023	Open Lobby event in conjunction with Artswalk, 5 – 9 p.m. – note new longer hours	Yes
November 3, 2023	Nights with the Museum, 6:30 – 8 p.m., featuring Jennifer Mermilliod, architectural historian, JM Research & Consulting, and Restored TV show historian “ <i>Evergreen Cemetery: Riverside's Pioneer Burial Grounds Reflect Local History and National Trends</i> ”	No

	Learn about the evolution of American cemetery design, funerary architecture, and death and burial practices embodied in Riverside's oldest cemetery and the extraordinary citizens its grounds embrace	
November 5, 2023	First Sunday, 1 – 4 p.m., Blossom Maciel demonstrates basketweaving	Yes
December 1, 2023	Nights with the Museum, 6:30 – 8 p.m., featuring Cathy Gudis, "From King Citrus to the Empire of Logistics"	No
December 3, 2023	First Sunday, 1 – 4 p.m., orange ornaments	Yes
December 7, 2023	Artswalk, 6 – 9 p.m., Great Backyard Bird Count holiday-themed garlands	Yes
December 9, 2023	Christmas Open House at Heritage House + get your 100 th anniversary calendar!	Yes
December 12, 2023	99 th Birthday Party, 4 – 6 p.m., main museum; get your 100 th anniversary calendar and enjoy a cupcake	Yes

Staffing

Recruitments continue for the Coordinator of Institutional Advancement and the Manager of Curatorial Services. As the City approaches the start of its biennial budgeting cycle, the Museum is examining its post-reopening staffing needs.

Advisory Teams

The staff-level advisory teams are open to new members, who need not be Board members. Staff are always interested in new members for these teams who can bring expertise aligned with the goals of the team.

- Collections Committee – This committee meets in person to consider collections activity. Due to forthcoming staff absences and the pace of actions for this Committee, the next regular meeting was rescheduled for November 8, 2023, and the every-other-month schedule will resume from that point.
- Harada House Project Team – This Team meets virtually to focus on programming and public communications regarding Harada House and its Interpretive Center. The Team will meet next on October 6, 2023, with new Curator of History Laura Fisher leading the group for the first time.
- Branding and Marketing Team – Staff continue to await a new draft website prior to convening this Team, which does not have a set meeting schedule.
- Design Team – This Team's role is bringing community members' perspectives to the redesign of the main museum. This Team does not have a set meeting schedule but may be convened immediately after the Open Lobby event on November 2, 2023.
- Program Team – This Team provides input on future exhibitions, education programs, collaboration with the school districts, and mission-based events. This Team met last on September 6, 2023, with a high level of participant engagement. The Team meets next on November 1, 2023.

Volunteer and Support Opportunities

Volunteers continue to be needed for event support and to train as touring docents for Heritage House. Please encourage interested individuals you may know to contact Teresa Woodard Belding, twoodard@riversideca.gov.

The Museum remains able to accommodate two to three interns per term, depending upon workloads. The Museum is not hosting interns this term but is open to do so for the spring 2024.

Marketing and Communications

Board members may continue to notice marketing and communications that are no longer accurate due to the delay in the Heritage House path project. Cancellation notices have been issued as it has been possible to do so.

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.
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. The Museum seeks non-City funding regularly, and two grant-funded programs are described above in this report. 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 during the extended closure, 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