



# Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

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**TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD**                      **DATE: SEPTEMBER 27, 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 have begun preparation of the final stage of documentation, construction drawings (CDs). This stage is expected to continue through the calendar year and will result in fully detailed, biddable construction documents. Staff continue to meet often with the architects to discuss everything from security procedures to plant lists to fixtures and finishes.

Another "Open Lobby" event is scheduled for November 2, 2023, coinciding with Artswalk. In similar fashion to the even held in May, drawings in their current state of development will be on view and available for public comment, and the architects will be present to take questions.

A presentation and request to recommend a Certificate of Appropriateness for the design approach were made to the Cultural Heritage Board on August 16, 2023. A similar request to recommend the design approach is made to you, the Museum of Riverside Board, at today's meeting. Both recommendations will be forwarded to City Council when that body next considers moving the project to the next stage.

Historic Houses

Progress continues on both Harada House, Phase I, and the Harada House Interpretive Center. Independent peer reviews of the approach to raising up Harada House and rebuilding its foundations are under way. A presentation and request to recommend a Certificate of Appropriateness for the design approach were made to the Cultural Heritage Board on August 16, 2023. Due to historic preservation demands, there is far less latitude for creative design in the approach to the Harada House Interpretive Center than there is with respect to the main Museum expansion.

At Heritage House, the Summer 2023 path resurfacing project has experienced delays and will not be completed in time to permit an on-time reopening of the house in September. Impacts on programming include the need to cancel the 2023 Moon Festival and postpone the installation of the exhibition *Quackery and Cures in the Victorian Era*. At the time of the preparation of this report, *Behind the Black Veil* (with a slightly curtailed schedule) and the November Victorian tea are expected to go forward.

Collections

The cabinet anchoring project has been completed. The conclusion of this years-long project to obtain preservation-grade storage cabinetry and prepare all of the cabinets for use now means that a long list of tasks aimed at safer and more accessible storage of collections can proceed.

Please note in your packet for this meeting the summary of collections activity for the past fiscal year. Each transaction hones the collection, aligns it more thoughtfully with the Collections Development Plan, and ensures the Museum's compliance with legal and ethical demands that affect collections.

Exhibitions and Programs

As noted above, the Fall exhibition for Heritage House, *Quackery and Cures in the Victorian Age*, has been postponed due to the site path resurfacing project's schedule. While stating that staff cannot predict if contractors will complete the work in the anticipated time frame, staff aim to resume full normal programming with *Behind the Black Veil*. Regular programming continues without hiatus downtown (Artswalk, Nights with the Museum). First Sundays resumes in October. Nature Lab On-the-Go has debuted, and a new regular partnership has been forged with Riverside County Parks.

Progress continues on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition to be called *Dear Riverside ...* The calendar of 100 programs for 2024 also firms up daily in preparation for the launch of a physical calendar in December at Christmas Open House (December 9, 2023).

The approval by the Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) of the proposal to rename Highland Elementary to Harada Elementary has been welcomed by all. Meetings with RUSD are anticipated during which staff will learn what the Museum can provide in the way of interpretation and Harada-related educational material in order to make this designation more meaningful to the school's students.

Show your support for Museum programs by attending them! Please note that First Sundays have concluded for the season and will resume in October.

Date	Program	Volunteer opportunity?
October 1, 2023	First Sundays resume, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.	Yes
October 5, 2023	Artswalk, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Yes

October 6, 2023	Nights with the Museum, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., featuring Jennifer Mermilliod, “Evergreen Cemetery and Its Notable Inhabitants”	No
October 14, 2023	Opening program for new mini-exhibition at the Arlington branch of the Library, <i>Fred Stebler of Riverside: Machinery Whiz</i>	Yes
November 2, 2023	Open Lobby event in conjunction with Artswalk, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.	Yes

Staffing

New Curator of History Laura Fisher began her duties on August 4, 2023, and new Curator of Natural History Ian Wright began on August 18, 2023. Recruitments are under way for the Coordinator of Institutional Advancement and the Manager of Curatorial Services.

Advisory Teams

The staff-level advisory teams are open to new members, who need not be Board members. Staff are especially interested in additional members for the Collections Committee and the Branding and Marketing Team.

- Collections Committee – The Committee met on August 9, 2023. Due to forthcoming staff absences and the projected pace of actions this Committee must consider, the next regular meeting will be held on November 8, 2023, with the every-other-month schedule continuing from that point. Suggestions for one or two additional non-staff community members are needed. While all interested are encouraged, individuals with some background and knowledge of collections matters is desirable.
- Harada House Project Team – This Team meets virtually to focus on programming and public communications regarding Harada House and its Interpretive Center. The Team met on August 4, 2023. With the hire of Curator of History Laura Fisher, the responsibilities of chair for this Team will shortly pass to her. Museum Director Robyn Peterson has been interim chair since the resignation of Lisa Masengale. The next regularly scheduled meeting is October 6, 2023, a date that may change to accommodate the transition of chairs.
- 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 July 5, 2023, with good attendance and useful discussions regarding building connections with the schools. Its meeting on September 6, 2023, had not yet occurred at the time of the drafting of this report.

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](mailto:twoodard@riversideca.gov).

The Museum remains able to accommodate two to three interns per term, depending upon workloads, but has not yet learned whether interns will join the staff for the Fall 2023 term.

### Marketing and Communications

The programming changes necessitated by the delay in the Heritage House path project have adversely affected some marketing and communications that have already been released. Staff are at work to ensure that frequent communications about the cancellations and postponements is released. Board members will see (or may already have seen) an RPU utility bill insert promoting the Open Lobby event on November 2, 2023. Patience is still required as the Museum awaits its turn for website overhaul. Good news on this front is the support from City Manager Mike Futrell for the City to have a robust and attractive website. To this end, he is supporting an impending hire whose responsibility will be maintaining the webpages for the Museum and the Library.

Exhibition Designer Elise Burgos has developed a 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary-specific logo, which will appear on all communications during the year 2024.



### 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 projects and progress on the main museum renovation and expansion 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 study, celebrate, and serve the full diversity of Riverside. Programs in preparation continue to reflect an emphasis on equity and access. Efforts to reach into neighborhoods and connect with a wide variety of demographics promote access.

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