

Riverside Metropolitan Museum 2025

The Argument for a Stand Alone Urban Museum with Purpose, Regional Clout & International Options



SCHEME 1B

From Elbasani & Logan (ELS), Feasibility Study, 1990, Orange Street elevation.

**Submitted to City of Riverside, Blue Ribbon Task Force on
Library/Museum Expansion. May 19, 2008.**

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Riverside 2025: The Renaissance Initiative & Big City Urbanity

By 2025, Riverside will be a City nearing 400,000, with a dense downtown core of more than a thousand new upscale residential units, combined with about that many single family dwellings within the surrounding historic neighborhoods. Riverside will sit in a greater service area of 2.5 million. Downtown Riverside (DR) will be the civic and cultural capital of Inland Southern California. DR will be the regional equivalent of the Roman Forum, where culture, civil society, and governance come together in a way that teaches civic pride and elicits what it means to be a good citizen of an inclusive community. Riverside will require a Museum to match its status.

RMM 2025: A Museum with Community-building Purpose

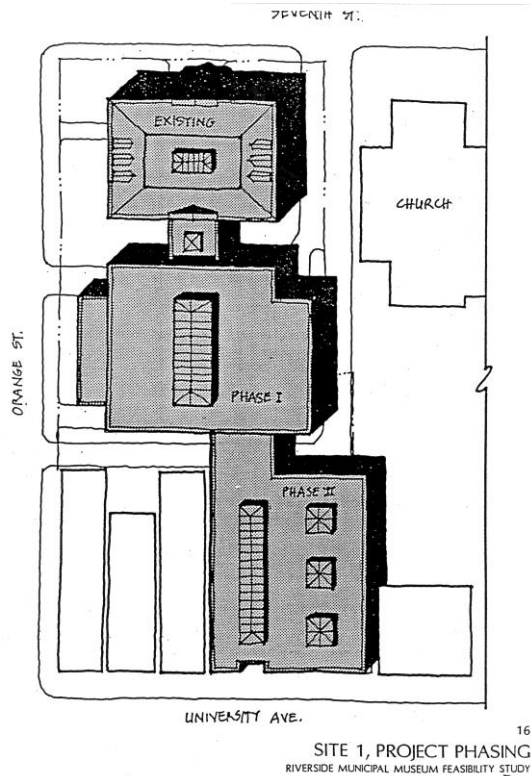
Given Riverside's status by 2025, RMM ought to be a nationally recognized urban Museum of at least 70,000 gsf, including the 20,000 gsf of historic primary structure, and 60,000 gsf of new additional facility. The new facility should be added to the immediate rear of the original building at Mission Inn Avenue and Orange Street. The full build-out would require the acquisition of the surface parking lot at the southeast corner of Lemon and University Avenue, behind the 1st Congregational Church. One plan suggested that this occur in a Phase II, though it might not ever get built if it is not completed now.

RMM will then claim Regional Stature, National Treasures, and International Options. It will build community through cultural, natural historical, and regional historical exhibitions, collections, and educational programs. Through its strategic and inclusive collections policies, RMM will promote social and environmental responsibility. By tapping Riverside's International Sister Cities, RMM will bring treasures to the City from Asia, Mexico and Africa (E. G., *Treasures of the One-Eyed Dragon Date Masamune*, Sendai, Japan).

Professional Alternatives, 1990, 2006: In 1990, the RMM completed a professional needs assessment that called for an expansion to at least **75,000** gross square feet by 2025. A subsequent site selection study in 2006 reinforced the 1990 estimate of space needs, and urged the RMM to expand to the immediate rear of the current historic Museum building. While both investigations looked seriously at alternative sites for a new, purpose-built Museum, all the compelling factors pointed to restoration of the historic building, with the addition of a new Museum facility to the immediate rear (south elevation), and southeast corner of Lemon and University.

- **Elbasani & Logan (ELS) Feasibility Study 1990**, conducted at the behest of the Museum Board, clearly projected an immediate need for 52,000 gsf, and recommended that the expansion occur at the current site, with a new addition of 30,000 gsf on three floors. To achieve the full build-out, ELS proposed an addition on the surface parking lot to the southeast of the Museum, directly behind the First Congregational Church. Phase II would take the size of the RMM to the projected 75,000 gsf. The ELS Museum Program is slightly dated, but could easily be brought current and used by the architects to design the new addition(s) to the rear of a fully restored Museum building. Scheme 1B appears to be the best option in the ELS plan (see ELS in your packet).

- **RATIO Architects Site Selection Study 2006**, looked at three sites for a new purpose built Museum, and came back confirming the ELS proposal to restore the current building and add at least 30-40,000 gsf to the immediate rear (south) of the building. RATIO's Bill Browne also recommended the ELS addition on the parking lot to the southeast of the Museum. (Note: Bill Browne designed the 260,000 gsf Indiana State Museum in Indianapolis, where his firm resides, and sited the Conseco Field house for the Indiana Pacers Basketball Team. Bill conducted this study for the Museum pro bono, by the way).



Why the current site?

Each of these studies reviewed multiple sites in the Downtown for new purpose-built RMM building. Both reports instead recommended restoration of the current RMM building, and design and construction of new additions to the rear of the historic facility.

Like the magnetic north pole, drawing all compass readings to it, the architects' recommendation kept coming back to location. Located directly in the heart of the Mission Inn Historic District cultural center, RMM sits diagonally across the street from the National Historic Landmark hotel itself, which draws a million paid visitors a year. The Museum is part of a cultural complex that encompasses all the principal museums in the City.

The RMM has resided at its current location since 1948, and the restoration and expansion of the RMM there will build on that familiar brand to give Riverside an urban RMM, with the capacity to draw visitors from far and wide.

The current location will accommodate the required architectural program, including a 6,000-gsf traveling exhibition gallery. A major expansion on the present site will enable the RMM to continue its strategic collecting for cultural inclusion and environmental education.

Telling the Riverside Story: Implementing the ELS/RATIO Plan will enable the RMM to tell the big and important story of this City, from Judge John Wesley North, the friend of Lincoln, to the navel orange barons, to the big industrialists like Joseph L. Hunter, to Frank Miller, UC Riverside, March field, and beyond. Moreover, it will allow RMM to strategically pursue the materials of the omitted, the voiceless, the many immigrant

groups, and the ordinary people who also made this City great. This proposal will allow the RMM to reach for excellence and equity in pursuit of its Mission.

Expansion at the current site will keep the RMM at the center of Downtown, and will preserve a very significant historic civic structure. It will enable RMM to continue its collaboration with surrounding churches, museums, schools, the Main Library, and Downtown Partnership. The land also belongs to the City, obviating the need to purchase costly property on a different site.

RMM Museum Program Master Plan

A RMM Program Master Plan can be completed within 90 days, if based upon the ELS study. It should include the following stakeholders:

- Museum staff
- Museum Board
- Riverside Museum Associates
- Outside Community Stakeholders, including the Mayor's Youth Council, RDP, Cultural Consortium, & others
- Representatives of surrounding Museums and cultural organizations
- Two members of the City Council
- A professional Museum Planning Consultant such as Marcy Goodwin of Pasadena

Costs Analysis and funding Options

ELS and their cost estimator projected the cost for Scheme 1B, Phase I of their plan at about \$13 million in 1990 dollars. At today's rate of inflation, that figure has probably jumped to at least \$20 million for the Phase I addition. The funding for restoration and retrofit has already been identified, and committed by the City. The additional funds would need to be identified and added by the City.

If the vision of a large stand alone RMM, at Mission Inn and Orange, is promulgated, naming opportunities and grants can be tapped for additional funding. Groups such as the Raincross Group, RDP, Riverside African American Historical Society, Inland Korean American Association, Inland Chinese Association, Riverside Mexican American Historical Society, and others want to help make this expansion a reality, since it will provide for the preservation of their artifacts and archival materials. Corporations and Foundations want to help too.

Operational Costs: Contract RMM Ops to a RMM Foundation

The present RMM operations budget comes in at a bit over \$2 million per annum. If the City adopted the Bowers Museum model, it could privatize operations of the expanded RMM over a ten-year transition period, contracting ops to a RMM Foundation. The City of Riverside would retain ownership of the facilities and artifacts, and place operations under contract to the non-profit entity, saving PERS and medical costs, along with City staff salaries.

Parking

At least three City parking garages stand within two blocks of the RMM, yielding over 500 spaces. These facilities alone can suffice for visitor parking. The Raincross Group also has a viable parking proposal in its recommendations to this body.

Recommendation to Blue Ribbon Task Force

1. Museum Architectural Program for Expansion

Adopt the findings of ELS 1990 and RATIO Architects 2006 for the restoration of the current historic Metropolitan Museum building, and the design and construction of a new addition to the immediate rear (south) of the building of at least 30,000 gsf, and an addition of 30,000 gsf on the surface parking lot to the southeast of the RMM.

2. Museum Program Master Plan

Urge the City to hire a professional Museum Planner to assist with the revision of the ELS 1990 Program Plan for the addition(s), and call for the revision to be completed within 90 days. This is essential before the architect receives the green light to go ahead with the design.

3. Operations

Form a RMM Foundation and transition Museum operations to the Foundation over a ten-year period, with the City retaining ownership of the physical plant and artifact collections. It will save the City PERS and medical outlays, and give the RMM greater flexibility to compete for grants and aid, and corporate sponsorship of blockbuster exhibitions.

I urge you to give Riverside citizens the Museum they deserve.