



# Park and Recreation Commission

*City of Arts & Innovation*

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**TO: HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS** **DATE: JANUARY 30, 2019**

**FROM: PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES  
RIVERSIDE ARTS ACADEMY PROGRAM**

## **ISSUE:**

Receive an update on the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department Riverside Arts Academy program.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Park and Recreation Commission receive a report on the Riverside Arts Academy program and provide feedback as appropriate.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The 2008 economic recession brought serious challenges to Riverside and surrounding communities. In 2011-2012, local school districts reported a loss of \$46 million in state tax revenue that either eliminated or minimized the programs in arts and music from their curriculum, as they shifted resources into core classes like English and math. At the same time, many Riverside residents stepped back from community involvement due to financial challenges including unemployment, foreclosures, increased cost of living and salary reductions. Limited citizen engagement threatened the sense of community, and adding to the difficulties in providing visual and performing arts programs in Riverside, was a budget reduction that challenged the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department.

The Riverside Arts Academy (RAA) was implemented in December 2012, upon the request of Councilmember Andy Melendrez and the City of Riverside Parks, Recreation & Community Services Department. It was based on a need to offer visual and performing arts for the underserved youth. The program began with six classes offered at César Chávez Community Center, all of which were taught by volunteers, with a total of 90 students enrolled.

RAA is "Changing Lives!" The mission of RAA is to provide instruction in a broad-based curriculum that focuses on improving the quality of life through dance, music and visual arts for all youth. The program teaches discipline, helps improve self-esteem, inspire creativity, and helps youth set and reach their goals. At RAA, participants are encouraged to explore, create, and reach their full potential. Each class provides enriching lessons that enable each child to discover classical, new and innovative ideas that allow them to explore beyond their

imaginations.

## **DISCUSSION:**

Presently, the RAA offers 50 classes in the four forms of art: dance, music, visual and performing arts, at three community centers (César Chávez, Arlanza/Bryant and Villegas) located within low-income communities. The goal of RAA is to introduce underserved youth and their families to the arts at a discounted rate of \$15 per six-week session with approved scholarships. At this time, 88% of the registered participants qualify under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) standards. RAA programming is conducted Monday through Friday between 3:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. and the Harmony Project youth orchestra is held every Saturday between 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

With 300 registrations per six-week session, RAA's goal is to reach 2,400 students by the end of the fiscal year, with a current enrollment of 1,197. RAA offers many different variations of dance programming and art classes for ages 4 – 17, and music programs that include guitar, keyboard, drums and ukulele, along with harmony project classes that offer musicianship as well as an orchestra component for ages 7-17. In addition to classes offered through RAA, participants are also provided the opportunity to perform their newly learned skills at local and city-wide special events, including; the Eastside Fall Festival, Flash Mob, Winter Wonderland and the RAA Winter Finale. Through the efforts of RAA, the program has developed collaborations with other successful entities, such as our two local school districts Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) and Alvord Unified School District (AUSD) and major universities such as University of California Riverside, Cal Baptist University (CBU), Riverside City College, and La Sierra University.

RAA staff currently consists of a Recreation Services Coordinator, Assistant Recreation Coordinator and nine instructors. RAA also works in collaboration with California Riverside Ballet, who provides instruction for all ballet classes that are offered at the three RAA sites through grant-funding.

In April 2016, RAA became an affiliate of the nationally recognized Harmony Project, resulting in the launch of Harmony Project-Riverside. Harmony Project helps to promote the healthy growth and development of children through the study, practice and performance of music. As an affiliate, youth and families will have the opportunity to explore the musical aspirations from voice to instruments. Music keeps kids safe, in school and inspired. Research shows that Harmony Project students strive in education and become self-motivated, building confidence while preparing to excel in school and beyond. The RAA/Harmony Project Riverside offers classes in violin, cello and viola, with the addition of the youth orchestra to follow in the footsteps of Harmony Project-Los Angeles.

In January 2018, Harmony Project Riverside was implemented at CBU, under the leadership of Dr. Steven Posegate, RAA Board Member. CBU's Collingsworth School of Music opened its doors every Saturday to RUSD and AUSD participants for music instruction.

In October 2018, RUSD implemented Harmony Project Riverside afterschool music programs at Beatty, Bryant, Longfellow and Highgrove Elementary Schools. On Saturdays, RUSD Harmony Project students gather at César Chávez Community Center for group ensembles and music theory instruction.

The program has grown exponentially over the past few years and the department looks forward to gaining additional partners, expanding programming and offering more children the opportunity to participate in the arts.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

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Attachment: Presentation