



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD

DATE: JUNE 24, 2020

FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: DIRECTOR'S UPDATE REGARDING COVID-19, THE MAIN MUSEUM RENOVATION AND EXPANSION, HISTORIC HOUSES, STAFFING, COLLECTIONS, EXHIBITIONS AND PROGRAMS, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, AND VOLUNTEER AND SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES

ISSUE:

Receive and file the Director's Update regarding COVID-19, the main museum renovation and expansion, historic houses, staffing, collections, exhibitions and programs, marketing and communications, and volunteer and support opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum of Riverside Board receive and file the Director's Update regarding COVID-19, the main museum renovation and expansion, historic houses, staffing, collections, exhibitions and programs, marketing and communications, and volunteer and support opportunities.

DISCUSSION:

COVID-19

City of Riverside leadership adopted timely and comprehensive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. A local state of emergency was declared followed by directives for facility closures and event cancellations, and a readily accessible source for information was sent to all residents. The City is currently collating all City departments' Safe Return-to-Work plans, which will take some time to implement as workspace modifications and revised operational protocols will be required. At its meeting on May 26, 2020, the City Council voted to extend the minimum staffing order for another thirty (30) days.

Visitation and public participation numbers for FY2019-2020—already impacted by the lack of availability of the main downtown site—will be adversely affected. All programs, tours, and events during the spring—which had promised to be a busy season—have been cancelled or postponed. A report on total FY visitation will be prepared early in the new fiscal year.

Main Museum Renovation and Expansion

As noted in an earlier informal update, the City Council received a proposed revision of the Measure Z spending plan that defers the renovation and expansion project to FY2022-2023. In

light of this, planning for reopening exhibitions and meetings of the design advisory group are temporarily suspended.

Historic Houses

The Museum was unsuccessful in its bid for a share of Community Development Block Grant funding this year to address the ADA-accessibility issues at Heritage House and repair the site's paths. Staff will continue to keep this funding source in mind and will reapply during the next cycle. Staff made headway during the spring on lesser tasks, such as repairs to windows and shutters and repairs to the fountain at Heritage House

Also completed was tarping of the roof at Harada House. Prior to the COVID-19-related shutdown, Harada House was tented for wood-boring beetles and termites during the week of March 3, 2020, and the roof was tarped against water incursion on May 11, 2020. The Museum awaits word on its applications for grant support and for listing by the National Trust for Historic Preservation on its "11 Most Endangered Historic Places" list; many of the review schedules at national agencies have been impacted by the shutdowns. Our application for state landmark status for Harada House was resubmitted in early March and is expected to be reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office at its August meeting.

A structural engineer conducted a detailed site visit at Robinson House, and their firm's report has been received. A meeting informed by this report to determine a path forward for this CDBG-funded project will be scheduled shortly.

Staffing

Six (6) Museum Department staff remain on stay-at-home orders. Their return to work will follow the City's plans in response to the stages of reopening issued by the state.

Collections

Migration of collection data to the new software platform is nearing completion. The last steps are testing and training. Training cannot occur until staff who will be using the software can be recalled to work.

Exhibitions and Programs

In light of the deferral of the main museum renovation/expansion, staff will be shifting emphasis to the development of virtual tours and digitized programming in order to create public access to more of the Museum's resources. Beginning with existing successful programs that are curriculum-based, the plan will eventually expand to include new virtual programming for all audiences and purposes that align with the Museum's mission.

All spring and summer programs and events have been cancelled or postponed under the emergency orders relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. The programming planned specifically to celebrate the August 2020 centenary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment giving U.S. women the right to vote is fortunately able to be postponed to 2021 and still be historically linked to events relating to this centenary. The Alice in Wonderland-themed tea in the Heritage House gardens will also be rescheduled to a time when it can be held on site as planned.

Marketing and Communications

Meetings to seek public input on our rebranding options had begun just prior to the cancellation of public gatherings exceeding ten (10) persons. Meetings will resume as soon as possible, and it is expected that brand selection and development will be completed during the new fiscal year.

Volunteer and Support Opportunities

As of this writing, the Museum continues to be unable to schedule volunteers to work on site. Volunteers are crucial to the operation of Heritage House, for example, so the house must remain closed until this restriction is lifted.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

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