



Community & Economic Development Department
3900 Main Street, Riverside, CA 92522 | Phone: (951) 826-5371 | RiversideCA.gov

Planning Division

CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD MEETING DATE: MAY 20, 2026
AGENDA ITEM: 7

PROPOSED PROJECT

Case Numbers	Not Applicable	
Request	To receive and file a presentation on the status of the architectural design for Harada House, Phase I, and the Harada House Interpretive Center (formerly known as Robinson House).	
Applicant	Not Applicable	
Project Location	3356 and 3342 Lemon Street, situated on the east side of Lemon Street between Third and Fourth Streets	
APN	213121005; 213121004	
Ward	1	
Neighborhood	Downtown	
Historic District	Heritage Square Historic District	
Historic Designation	National Register of Historic Places; National Historic Landmark; City Landmark #23; Structure of Merit; Historic District Contributor	
Staff Planner	Not Applicable	

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Cultural Heritage Board receive and file this presentation on the status of the architectural design for Harada House and the Harada House Interpretive Center (formerly known as Robinson House).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The National Historic Landmark Harada House

Harada House is a two-story wood-framed house in its original neighborhood in Ward 1 of downtown Riverside, California. The feel of the neighborhood is middle class residential rather than urban. The lot is 4,135 square feet. The house was built in the mid-1880s as a single-story house over an unfinished masonry cellar. The Haradas added a second floor in 1916 shortly after their December 2015 purchase of it. It is a straightforward building with no extraordinary architectural styling. The current

appearance of the house reflects the Haradas' 1916 addition of the second floor and no significant additional modifications. It totals 1,862 square feet. The only alteration in the last century visible at street level was enclosing the upper front sleeping porch, which was done shortly after World War II. Virtually all of the historic plaster, wallpaper, fixtures, and hardware remain. The chain-link fence was installed around the perimeter of the site at an unknown date presumed to have been late in the life of the last Harada resident, Sumi, who died in 2000.

The house was donated by Harada heirs to the City of Riverside/Museum of Riverside in 2003 with its original contents. The contents were immediately cataloged, packed, and removed; the house has stood empty of furnishings since that time. Interventions since 2003 have included interior and exterior bracing and shoring of foundations and plaster, roof repairs, and emergency responses to address site drainage and security issues. The house is currently protected by a scaffolding with a roof cover and a plywood wall. The landscaping has been removed; the site is not presently irrigated due to concerns regarding foundation stability. In 2017-2018, all the original siding was removed to facilitate an engineer's structural survey; the siding was fumigated, encapsulated, and removed to secure Museum collection storage. The house currently presents temporary fiberboard siding painting the original color of the house. The house and its contents are accessioned into the Museum of Riverside's permanent collection.

Harada House earned its NHL status because it was the subject of a civil rights court case in 1916-1918, the People of the State of California v. Jukichi Harada et al., in which the Superior Court of California upheld the Fourteenth Amendment rights of the American-born children of Japanese immigrants Jukichi and Ken Harada against California's Alien Land Law targeting Asians. The Harada case was the first test in the United States of the constitutionality of exclusionary and explicitly racist alien land and property laws; the house derives its core significance from the successful outcome of this case. Harada House is the physical embodiment of an event that was ultimately positive and triumphant for the Haradas and the Japanese American community, in contrast to many of the narratives associated with World War II-related commemorative sites. It illustrates a key turning point in the social and civil rights history of the nation as well as standing as a significant legacy relating to the ethnic heritage of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans in California.

Harada House exhibits a high degree of historic integrity and a low degree of structural integrity, the one correlating directly to the other. Sumi Harada, the youngest daughter of Jukichi and Ken Harada, occupied the house alone from the mid-1940s until 2000, shortly before the family donated the house to the City of Riverside. Sumi had no interest in altering the house and had, in any case, no financial means to undertake changes. Thus, a combination of outdated construction methods (including engineering issues when the second story was added in 1916), decades of deferred maintenance while Sumi occupied the house, and extensive termite and water damage have created the current compromised structural conditions. However, because the house itself was the subject of the landmark judicial decision in 1918, and because it has been so little altered since then, the house—as an artifact—assumes importance exceeding what might be true of a historic house serving primarily as an example of an architectural style. The decades of neglect render the structure unsafe, but paradoxically this same neglect today gives the house its high degree of historic integrity. Original historic building fabric remains in place that would long since have been replaced by regular maintenance.

The structure formerly known as Robinson House is a single-story wood-framed house converted into a duplex in 1996. The lot is 4,791 square feet, and the house is 1,276 square feet. It was built circa 1884. The name "Robinson House" stems from the occupant at the time the Harada family moved next door, Cynthia Robinson, who initiated the effort to remove the Haradas from the neighborhood. Robinson House is part of the Heritage Square Historic District. It was acquired in 2014 by the Museum after a private fundraising campaign with the intention of its being used as the Harada House Interpretive Center. Its physical condition is very poor, and the structure was

red-tagged in 2020. The original front three rooms of this structure will be salvaged, and the remainder will be demolished. Following a sequence of events determined by the engineering needs at Harada House, the original three rooms of Robinson House will be relocated onto their original footprint and rehabilitated, and the newly constructed remainder of the Interpretive Center will be built behind them. All work will proceed according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

The architect for both structures is K+R Design of Pasadena. The project nears completion of the construction document (CD) phase. Completion of 100% CDs is expected in May 2026.

EXHIBITS LIST

1. Aerial/Location Map

Prepared by: Robyn G. Peterson, Museum Director
Reviewed by: Scott Watson, Historic Preservation Officer
Approved by: Edgardo Caldera, Acting City Planner