



# Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

*City of Arts & Innovation*

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**TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD**                      **DATE: JULY 23, 2025**  
**FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT**                      **WARDS: ALL**  
**SUBJECT: DIRECTOR'S UPDATE REGARDING THE MAIN MUSEUM RENOVATION, HISTORIC HOUSES, COLLECTIONS, EXHIBITIONS AND PROGRAMS, BUDGET, 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, budget, 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, budget, staffing, advisory teams, volunteer and support opportunities, and marketing and communications.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **Main Museum Renovation**

The groundbreaking for the project was held successfully on June 27, 2025, with over 200 people in attendance. The notice to proceed was issued on June 30, 2025, and staff have turned over access to the site to BNBuilders. Staff meets every Thursday morning with the general contractors' team.

### **Historic Houses**

Staff are under way with our new architectural and engineering design team, K+R Design, which is at work on the Harada House and Harada House Interpretive Center project. They have begun with an aggressive schedule but, as yet, there are many unknowns regarding cost.

We are cautiously optimistic that, contrary to prior reports, we may actually be able to draw on part of the Save America's Treasures federal grant for Harada House. We will keep the Board informed.

We continue to move forward with a phased approach with our Harada project documentarian. Approximately half of the necessary funding is secured from private sources. The Board's

approval to accept donations in excess of \$25,000 is necessary prior to taking the documentarian's agreement to City Council. We seek your approval to support acceptance of the gift from the Riverside Museum Associates at this meeting.

Heritage House is closed for the summer, and projects that are moving forward during the summer closure include new site fencing, and painting in the retail shop and carriage house kitchen. Painting in the carriage house upstairs office and installation of a new washer and dryer are completed. Staff continue to work with a graphic design company on a package of wayfinding signage. Critique of the first draft has been returned to the designer.

### Collections

Collections work continues on the long-term projects with little to report other than steady progress. These longstanding, unseen tasks (rehousing, retroactive documentation, configuration of storage, and similar) represent a great deal of hard work on the part of staff, with scant opportunity for the public to be aware. Most of this work is completed by Collections Registrar Katie Grim, Curatorial Services Manager Jennifer Dickerson, the curators, the educators, and the Museum's collections support temp Paige Kuster.

Space was freed up in the Rumsey 2 warehouse by the departure of the Soroptimists' historic marker stones, which had been occupying a large area of storage space for over a decade after having been removed from the convention center in 2012 without a complete relocation plan. They are to be reinstalled in the sidewalk in front of the Riverside County Courthouse, a project that may be completed by the time of this meeting.

### Exhibitions and Programs

*First Comes Love: Courtship in the Victorian Era*, closed successfully on June 29, 2025. The evening before, a well-attended concert by the Mission Philharmonic occurred on the back lawn. Planning for the fall exhibition, *Quackery and Cures in the Victorian Era*, is under way and on schedule; it promises to be a fascinating and fun feature for the house.

Work continues with our contract exhibition designer, Riggs Ward Design, to develop the exhibitions that will reopen the main museum. Due to the three vacancies among our program staff, we are stressed to keep up with the necessary staff-level contributions to this planning process. Staff are very pleased, however, with our contract guest curator, Dr. Julie Goodman from CBU, and the dynamic, helpful, engaged group that is our Immigration Exhibition Community Advisory Team.

The Museum has enjoyed record-breaking attendance at several of its programs this past spring. As many Board members know, Ice Cream Social hit the carrying capacity of the Heritage House site. Staff, volunteers, and all involved are to be commended for keeping up and keeping our audience uniformly happy. The Beatrix Potter "LiTEArature" was a success, and Nights with the Museum with avocado specialist Eric Focht were two other spring highlights. During the summer, as is typical, the program schedule is less intensive, but we're pleased to report that we'll be hosting a few summer school tours through Heritage House, which is not typical for the Museum.

Date	Program	Location	Volunteer opportunity?
August 1, 2025	Nights with the Museum, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. (NOTE: new earlier time), Bill Shull on historic pianos and music-making	Main Library, Community Room	No
August 7, 2025	Artswalk, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., memory and nostalgia	Main Street	Yes

August 9, 2025	Nature hike with Ian Wright at the Riverside Corona Regional Conservation District grounds, 9:00 a.m.	RCRCD	No
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### Budget

The new fiscal year began on July 1, 2025. Financial challenges remain for the City, although managed hiring has eased to a small degree. The Museum has been cleared to recruit for our vacant Archivist position.

### Staffing

As noted above, existing staff continue to be pressured to absorb the load in the absence of multiple full-time positions. We have proactively moved ahead with preparations for the new staff we will need in advance of reopening by drafting job descriptions and initiating classification studies.

### Advisory Teams

The standing staff-level advisory teams are open to new members, who need not be Board members. An exception is the *ad hoc* Community Advisory Team for the immigration exhibition, which is complete at five members.

Committee / Team	Meeting interval	Role	Chair	Next meeting
Collections	Every other second Wednesday	Advising on collections activity	Jennifer Dickerson	September 10, 2025
Harada House Project Team	Every other first Friday	Programs and communications regarding Harada House	Acting chair Robyn Peterson	August 1, 2025
Branding and Marketing	Irregular – to revive in 2025	Public communications, PR, website	Chantal Downing	TBD
Programs	Every other first Wednesday	Program development, implementation, and coordination with partners	Jennifer Dickerson	September 3, 2025
Immigration exhibition Community Advisory Team	Intermittent beginning late January 2025	Advising during planning for the immigration exhibition, estimated to be two years	Robyn Peterson	September 11, 2025

### Volunteer and Support Opportunities

Please keep your ear to the ground for potential new volunteers, especially those interested in being touring docents at Heritage House or working our larger events and programs. Steps include registering with the City's new volunteer management software system (<https://riversideca.cervistech.com>.) and being Livescanned. **Please note:** talk to Teresa Woodard about available volunteer opportunities and create your profile on Cervis before proceeding to additional steps.

### Marketing and Communications

Michael Risher, our new Web Developer shared by the Museum and the Library, has begun his duties and already made a good start on creating the “armature” of our renewed website.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

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