



*City of Arts & Innovation*

# City Council Memorandum

---

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL      DATE: SEPTEMBER 5, 2023**

**FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT**

**SUBJECT: APPROVE REVISED CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCT FOR THE MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE**

**ISSUE:**

Approve revised Code of Ethics and Conduct for the Museum of Riverside.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council approve a revised Code of Ethics and Conduct for the Museum of Riverside.

**BOARD RECOMMENDATION:**

At a hybrid meeting on May 24, 2023, the Museum of Riverside Board, with seven members present for this vote and two absent, unanimously voted to recommend that City Council approve a revised Code of Ethics and Conduct for the Museum of Riverside

**BACKGROUND:**

The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) is the museum field's accrediting body. Fewer than 4% of museums in the United States are accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. As an accredited museum, the Museum of Riverside demonstrates that it strives to be a leader in the field by providing exemplary care of Riverside's history through stewardship of the Museum's collections and engagingly presenting community stories through exhibitions and programs.

The AAM defines five "core documents" required of each accredited museum. These documents must be approved by an accredited museum's governing body. The Museum of Riverside (Museum) is an AAM-accredited institution. It is thus obliged to comply and, furthermore, desires to comply with the field's standards even as they become more demanding. The code of ethics must be specific to the Museum and expand on the AAM's industry-wide code. The Museum's last ethics policy revision occurred in 2015 in preparation for the most recent reaccreditation process.

## **DISCUSSION:**

While the Museum was reaccredited in 2018, the process included a period when the accreditation commission tabled the Museum's bid for reaccreditation to permit a number of issues to be addressed. Among other concerns that have been or are being addressed, the accreditation review committee identified shortcomings in the Museum's Ethics Policy. An independent peer review consultant conducted an operational assessment at about the same time and reached many of the same conclusions.

The revised document currently recommended is the last of the policy documents that required attention. It was written by the Museum Director after researching other museums' examples and articles about the changing function of such documents. It incorporates social justice concerns that were rarely, if ever, addressed in earlier museum ethics statements. Because there is substantial overlap with existing Human Resources documents that guide the manner in which employees conduct themselves among their internal and external contacts, the document includes references and links to existing resources rather than restating them. During preparation of this document, revisions have been incorporated from Museum staff, the City of Riverside's Human Resources Department, and the City Attorney's office.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

The activities of the Museum of Riverside align with the Strategic Priority No. 1 *Arts, Culture and Recreation*. The Museum of Riverside Code of Ethics and Conduct supports, in particular, Goal No. 1.1 (strengthening Riverside's portfolio of arts, culture, recreation, senior, and lifelong learning programs and amenities), Goal No. 1.2 (enhancing equitable access to arts, culture, and recreational service offerings and facilities), and Goal No. 1.5 (supporting programs and amenities to further develop literacy, health, and education of children, youth, and seniors throughout the community).

Foundational documents that inform Museum programs further support the Strategic Priority NMo. 2 *Community Well-Being*. Specific goals supported by Museum programs and partnerships include Goal No. 2.3, which includes strengthening neighborhood identities, and Goal No. 2.5, which points to fostering relationships between community members and partner organizations.

1. **Community Trust** – Maintaining a policy document that articulates high ethical standards explicitly demonstrates a commitment to community service and a goal of earning community trust. A governing body-approved Code of Ethics is a requirement for accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums.
2. **Equity** – The Code of Ethics and Conduct incorporates expectations regarding equity and broad, transparent community service.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – The Code of Ethics and Conduct identifies and provides guidance in areas where ethical issues may arise in connection with financial matters.
4. **Innovation** – While a code of ethics is a standard operating requirement, the Museum's code is forward-looking in its inclusion of such sections as a land acknowledgment statement and a statement on racism, gender, and discrimination.

5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – The Code of Ethics and Conduct reflects staff efforts to remain abreast of a changing museum management environment in order to deliver services with relevance and lasting value.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by: Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director  
Certified as to  
Availability of funds: Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/Assistant Chief Financial Officer  
Approved by: Mike Futrell, City Manager  
Approved as to form: Phaedra A. Norton, City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Museum of Riverside Board Minutes – May 24, 2023
2. Museum of Riverside Code of Ethics and Conduct