



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE: FEBRUARY 26, 2025**

FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT **WARDS: ALL**

SUBJECT: DIRECTOR'S UPDATE REGARDING THE MAIN MUSEUM RENOVATION, HISTORIC HOUSES, THE 100th ANNIVERSARY, 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, the 100th anniversary, 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, the 100th anniversary, collections, exhibitions and programs, budget, staffing, advisory teams, volunteer and support opportunities, and marketing and communications.

DISCUSSION:

Main Museum Renovation

At the time of the preparation of this report, bids on the construction project were expected on February 4, 2025, from the three pre-qualified contractors. Staff anticipate the earliest possible date to take the bid to City Council will be mid-March.

Final tasks relating to clearing the downtown building include 1) removal of the final 5% of natural history collections, 2) removal of remaining archival and packing supplies, 3) removal of furniture and fixtures (many offered for surplus sale), 4) removal of refuse staff have generated during the process of vacating the building, and 5) full photography of the empty building.

Public Works completed the conversion of Orange Street between Mission Inn Avenue and University to one-way prior Festival of Lights.

Historic Houses

At the time of the preparation of this report, interviews were underway pursuant to selecting a new architectural design team for Harada House and the Harada House Interpretive Center. Also

under way was review of the six responsive firms who submitted proposals to become our Harada House project documentarian.

Regarding projects at Heritage House, bids to upgrade the site fencing were due January 7, 2025, for a project that may be completed in the spring. The recent project to upgrade the carriage house kitchen is completed, although further, less urgent improvements have been identified. Additional projects that fall into the category of improvements rather than maintenance include lighting in the carriage house public space, site signage, and upgrades in the carriage house office space. Many of the remaining improvements for Heritage House are unfunded or underfunded.

The 100th Anniversary

The Museum's ambitious 100th anniversary year was a success! *Dear Riverside, A Letter to Our First Love* concluded on January 5, 2025, and was dismantled. As part of the dismantling, documentation and storage solutions were improved for the dozens of collection objects included in the exhibition. The mastodon tusk on view was treated to stabilize the crack that developed during installation of the exhibition. Staff await visitation statistics from our host site, the Center for Social Justice & Civil Liberties.

Our 100 Events for 100 Years calendar was tiring but fulfilling. Exactly 100 programs were offered, with new programs scheduled for every event that had to be cancelled due to weather, site host issues, or other reasons.

Organizational partners who made the 100th celebration possible included the following (this list includes only organizations, not every individual performer or presenter):

CAHUILLA Bird	Riverside Community College District
California Citrus State Historic Park	Riverside Community Players
Captain Carl and His Mobile Tidepool	Riverside Corona Resource Conservation District
Center for Social Justice & Civil Liberties	Riverside County Department of Animal Services
Citrus City Events	Riverside Downtown Partnership
Día de los Muertos organizing committee	Riverside Fire Department
Dissertation Soap	Riverside Food Coop
Dreamland Care Villa	Riverside Hua Xia
Harada House Foundation	Riverside Museum Associates
Home Front at Camp Anza	Riverside Parks, Recreation and Community Services (including the Arts & Culture division)
Inlandia Institute	Riverside Public Library (several branches)
La Sierra Wind Consort	San Bernardino County Museum
Quilts of Valor	Sherman Indian High School
Raincross Master Chorale	Southern Wind Lion Dance
Riverside Arts Academy	Trinity Therapeutic Riding Center
Riverside Arts Council	UC Riverside

The gala was also largely a success, except the catering, for which the Museum issued an apology to ticket buyers. The Museum reiterates its sincere thanks to sponsors, table buyers, ticket buyers, and donors, **including all Board members!** Revenue goals were exceeded, and the process of coordinating a large event with a specific revenue goal was a learning experience for most staff. The next event approaching its scale will be the grand reopening in 2027.

Collections

A focus on collections projects will resume in the wake of emptying the main Museum building and wrapping up the demanding 100th anniversary year. A few projects that will be important

include 1) storage of collections recently moved into the warehouses for the first time, 2) catching up with processing the last rounds of accessions and deaccessions, 3) mapping locations in storage and upgrading records to include this detail, 4) continuing to digitize key collections (Harada, citrus history), 5) completing physical repatriation of outstanding items for which tribes or other entities must opt to accept, and 6) drafting a long-term conservation and preservation plan for collections. This is a sampling from the long list of collection-related projects, which includes many other minor yet pressing needs.

For a second time, the Museum has been pleased to accept (via the Riverside Museum Associates) a donation restricted to support of the anthropology collections from a fan of the anthropology side of the Museum. Last year, a similar gift permitted the purchase of a high-grade storage cabinet for small anthropology objects, and staff are free this year to make a similar unbudgeted purchase for the benefit of this collection.

Exhibitions and Programs

Roaring Riverside: 1920s Fashion was extended to close on February 16, 2025, allowing it to remain up through Valentine's Day. The next exhibition in Heritage House, *First Comes Love*, will center on Victorian weddings and be on view from March 14 through June 29, 2025. It's being developed by Curator of History Taylor Bythewood-Porter.

Staff continue to work with our contract exhibition designer, Riggs Ward Design, to develop the exhibitions that will reopen the main museum. The planning schedule has been extended in response to the later-than-expected release time for the construction bid.

A modestly compensated Community Advisory Team has been formed to assist with the immigration exhibition, which began its meetings in late January. The Museum thanks the Riverside Museum Associates for underwriting the stipends for the five members of this team.

Show your support for all Museum programs by attending them, telling others about them, and sharing our posts announcing them. **Please save the date of April 5, 2025, for a program featuring noted author Susan Straight and Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson (details to come).** Not long after that, on April 19, 2025, the Museum and its program partners will offer the third and final iteration of In/VISIBLE, Un/HEARD: Riverside's Civil Rights stories. This civil rights-related self-guided car tour will be supported by a California Humanities grant.

Date	Program	Volunteer opportunity?
March 2, 2025	First Sunday, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m., "The Science of Scents"	No
March 6, 2025	Artwalk, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., Dolores Huerta and button-making	Yes
March 7, 2025	Nights with the Museum, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., Main Library Community Room, Dr. Geoffrey Leung, "Blue Zones in Southern California"	No
March 14, 2025	<i>First Comes Love</i> opens with an activity at Heritage House	Maybe
March 21, 2025	Speed-dating event at Heritage House in connection with the exhibition <i>First Comes Love</i>	No

Budget

Only a small portion of the Museum's request to carry over unspent funding from FY2023-2024 was approved, which differs from our experience in recent prior years. The Museum Department was not singled out among the City's departments for denial of carryovers, but the situation presents some challenges regarding larger projects for which funding is not available in the current year budget. These projects primarily relate to the historic sites.

Staffing

Recruitment for the new Exhibition Designer continues.

The Museum will request that the position vacated by Brenda Buller Focht be reclassified to an Archivist position. A position of this type has long been needed.

Advisory Teams

The standing staff-level advisory teams are open to new members, who need not be Board members. An exception is the newly formed Community Advisory Team for the immigration exhibition, which is complete at five members; this Team will have met twice by the time of the present Museum Board meeting.

Committee / Team	Meeting interval	Role	Chair	Next meeting
Collections	Every other second Wednesday	Advising on collections activity	Jennifer Dickerson	Next meeting March 12, 2025
Harada House Project Team	Every other first Friday	Programs and communications regarding Harada House	Interim lead: Robyn G. Peterson	April 4, 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	March 5, 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	May 29, 2025

Volunteer and Support Opportunities

A strong need for volunteers continues in these areas: event support, touring docents, behind-the-scenes with collections, marketing and social media support, and other areas. Please ask interested individuals you may encounter to start their inquiry with Teresa Woodard Belding, twoodard@riversideca.gov. A volunteer handbook has been drafted and will soon be distributed to active volunteers. The City is also in the process of adopting new volunteer management software, intended to be more user-friendly than the prior system.

Marketing and Communications

Significant progress on the website is not expected until the Office of Communications recruits its new Web Developer who will be shared by the Museum and the Library. This position is in recruitment as of the date this report was drafted.

In 2025, marketing emphasis will be on the *Raincross Gazette* and, less often, the *Riversider Magazine*. Social media continues to be key. When the new web developer allows our new website to go live, this outlet will be key for construction and program updates.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

The activities of the Museum of Riverside align with the Strategic Priority, “Arts, Culture and Recreation.” Specific programs and activities mentioned in this report support, in particular, goal

1.1 (strengthening Riverside's portfolio of arts, culture, recreation, senior, and lifelong learning programs and amenities), goal 1.2 (enhancing equitable access to arts, culture, and recreational service offerings and facilities), and goal 1.5 (supporting programs and amenities to further develop literacy, health, and education of children, youth, and seniors throughout the community).

Museum programs further support the Strategic Priority, "Community Well-Being." Specific goals supported by Museum programs and partnerships include goal 2.3, which includes strengthening neighborhood identities, and goal 2.5, which points to fostering relationships between community members and partner organizations.

1. **Community Trust** – The Director's Report comprehensively familiarizes the Board with operating conditions, invites Board input, provides information on volunteer opportunities, and describes partnerships the Museum is pursuing. Progress on the Harada House main museum projects restore trust in the City's commitment to open these important cultural resources for the public.
2. **Equity** – The Director's Report describes the programs Museum staff and partners are implementing to celebrate and serve the full diversity of Riverside. Programs strive to emphasize equity and access. Marketing reaches into all neighborhoods. Community engagement efforts strive to reach a variety of demographic groups.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – The Director's Report updates the board on ongoing efforts to operate within the Department's budgets and apply a transparent and rigorous process when selecting contractors and expending resources. The Museum seeks non-City funding regularly and as practical. Museum budgets consistently run in the black, demonstrating responsible use of taxpayer dollars.
4. **Innovation** – The Director's Report reports on the development of original, locally relevant programming, as well as methods to achieve programmatic ends through proactive cultural partnerships and efficient promotions. Projects designed to extend the Museum's reach beyond its walls during the main museum closure employ innovative techniques and designs.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – The Director's Report reflects staff emphasis on cultural sustainability. The Report includes efforts to streamline operations, preserve Museum assets, deliver value to the taxpayer, model and teach cultural and environmental preservation, and develop solidly researched and affirming interpretation.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

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