Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: **MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD** **DATE:** **SEPTEMBER 24, 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 receives and files 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

Work on site continues. Salvage and preliminary demolition continue, as well as underground work and preparation for next steps. Other matters that have occupied recent weeks include hazardous materials management and securing permits not already in hand. Weekly meetings that include City staff, contractors, and architects continue. Some historic salvage has been removed from the site. When that process is completed, staff will formally request City Council approval to make donations to the Old Riverside Foundation and the Riverside Arts Council.

Historic Houses

The architectural and engineering design team for the Harada project, K+R Design, continues to work at a brisk pace through the design process. The initial set of drawings look good. The final round of costs that we're permitted to apply to the federal Save America's Treasures grant were incurred through September 12, 2025. Before the winter rains, we will replace the tarp currently protecting the Harada House roof.

Heritage House reopened on Friday, September 5, 2025. While the site is in excellent condition and has benefitted from a number of significant upgrades in recent years, its demands are

continual. Staff are reviewing a long list of small projects and will work through as many of those in the next few months as time, budget, and visitor convenience allow. Staff are identifying ways to fund fabrication and installation of the wayfinding signage in phases, as an allocation to cover all costs does not currently exist.

Collections

Collections work continues on the long-term projects. Staff eagerly await our new Archivist as a number of collections management projects will make quantum leaps forward with that increase in staff support.

Exhibitions and Programs

Quackery & Cures in the Victorian Age opened to praise and delight on September 5, 2025. The theme relates well to Black Veil, which will occur later in the season. The exhibition is supported by several fascinating special programs, one of which took place successfully on opening weekend. Please be sure to stop by to see this exhibition. While many pitched in, the charm of this exhibition and its mode of presentation are due to Katie Grim, Collections Registrar; Jennifer Dickerson, Curatorial Services Manager; Ian Wright, Curator of Natural History; Teresa Woodard, Museum Educator; and Kim Cobb, Associate Educator.

Work also continues with our contract exhibition designer, Riggs Ward Design, to develop the exhibitions that will reopen the main museum. The four exhibitions under development are not all progressing at the same pace, but at this point we remain on schedule for the anticipated grand reopening in mid-2027 (or so). The best-developed exhibitions are the new Nature Lab and The Wall (with a working exhibition title *Unpacking Our Story*). Exhibition elements that are not within the contract exhibition designer's scope are the "jewel cases" in the historic lobby, any elements we install in the central lobby, and interpretation that will accompany the plantings on the roof terrace.

The professional services agreement for Holden Films to produce the Harada documentary was scheduled for approval by City Council at its September 16, 2025, meeting. Following execution of the agreement, staff will schedule a project kick-off meeting.

Please save the date of **Saturday, December 6, 2025** (2:00 – 4:00 p.m.) for a special program the Museum has coordinated. A conversation between Riverside natives and local celebrities Susan Straight (author and distinguished UCR Professor of Creative Writing) and Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson will take place at RCC's Digital Library Auditorium. Both of them will reflect on their experiences with the Museum, museums in general, and other cultural influences that enriched their early years in Riverside. This ticketed event is priced at $50 (in-person) and $35 (digital), which includes an autographed copy of Susan Straight's most recent novel.

The Museum has concluded its "quiet" summer season, and programming is ramping up.

Date	Program	Location	Volunteer opportunity?
October 2, 2025	Artswalk, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., explore Victorian hoaxes and make your own imaginary creature	Main Street	Yes
October 3, 2025	Nights with the Museum, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. (NOTE: new earlier time), Kent Bramlett, Professor of Archaeology at La Sierra University will speak on the university's antiquities collection	Main Library, Community Room	No

October 3, 2025	Behind the Black Veil themed tours start, through November 2, 2024	Heritage House	Yes – consider becoming a docent!
October 5, 2025	First Sundays return with a program about the moon and moon deities, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.	Main Street	Yes
October 6, 2025	Save the date for Moon Festival! 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. **Thank you to those of you helping at this event!**	Heritage House	Yes
October 11, 2025	Visit our booth at the Riverside Book Fest	Main Library	No
October 15, 2025	Fossil Day with Ian Wright	Arlanza Library branch	Maybe
October 17, 2025	Movies on the Lawn, *The Man Who Could Cheat Death* (1959), gate opens 6:00, screening at 6:30 p.m.	Heritage House	Join the Snack Shack team!
October 18, 2025	Victorian Dark Carnival, noon – 4:00. Join us for strange and wonderful Victorian activities.	Heritage House	Maybe
October 22, 2025	Find us at the UCR Archives Fair!	UCR	No
December 6, 2025	**Save the date for conversation program with Susan Straight and Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson, 2:00 – 4:00**	**RCC Digital Library Auditorium**	**Maybe (hosts)**

Budget

While financial caution continues at the City, the Museum is incrementally moving ahead with as many hires and projects as it can. Preparation of the biennial budget for FYs 2026-2028 continues, with staff working to anticipate operating costs for a building that doesn't yet exist.

Staffing

All staff continue to take on heavy workloads, which is the result of not having enough positions as well as not having those positions allocated to us all filled. We're pleased to announce that on September 26, Steve Mandeville-Gamble, formerly of UCR Libraries, will join our staff as Archivist, reporting to Jennifer Dickerson, Curatorial Services Manager. The next recruitment will be a Marketing and Outreach Assistant, reporting to Chantal Downing, Institutional Advancement Coordinator. Former intern Oliver Huerta has joined Maha Shbaita as our second Heritage House weekend staffer. Heritage House weekend staff are hired through a temp agency.

Advisory Teams

If you haven't selected an advisory team, we hope you will. Please contact Robyn Peterson if either you or someone you know has expertise and interest in any of our teams. The *ad hoc* Community Advisory Team for the immigration exhibition is the only one not open to new members.

Committee / Team	Meeting interval	Role	Chair	Next meeting
Collections	Every other second Wednesday	Advising on collections activity	Jennifer Dickerson	November 10, 2025
Harada House Project Team	Every other first Friday	Programs and communications regarding Harada House	Acting chair Robyn Peterson	October 3, 2025
Grand Reopening Steering Team (to evolve after 2027 into	Expect meetings with increasing frequency up to reopening	All aspects of reopening events and communica-tions; general public	Chantal Downing	TBD – soon

the Marketing Advisory Team)		communications, PR, website		
Programs	Every other first Wednesday	Program development, implementation, and coordination with partners	Jennifer Dickerson	November 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	TBD as fabrication schedule becomes more clear

Volunteer and Support Opportunities

We encourage all Board members to go through the entire process to become City volunteers. 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

Substantive progress has occurred in the development of our new website. Staff remain hopeful of a soft launch in early fall. Please continue to let us know when you see advertisements, articles, or any other mention of the Museum. In particular, staff have been providing features for the *Raincross Gazette* and hope you have seen them.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by: Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director
Reviewed by: Ann Lovell, Manager of Operations