



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE: MAY 28, 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 kick-off meeting with BNBuilders of Irvine, California, occurred on May 7, 2025. A few permit-related items remain to be resolved before a notice-to-proceed can be issued. Once that's issued, the clock starts on the maximum two-year construction period.

Historic Houses

Staff continue to await completion of the necessary steps, which include City Council approval of the agreement, before we can begin work with our new architectural design team for Harada House and the Harada House Interpretive Center. We are also preparing documents for a phased approach to working with our Harada House project documentarian. Funding secured from private sources to date stands at \$170,000, or just under half the eventual cost for this multi-year project.

Projects at Heritage House that are moving along include installing the new site fencing after Ice Cream Social in May, painting the upstairs office space in the carriage house and installing new appliances. Staff are also working with a graphic design company on a package of wayfinding signage. Other small projects will be pursued as funding becomes available. The flowering plants used to furnish the Insect Fair butterfly tents in April are in the ground at Heritage House.

Collections

Collections work has focused on improved systems, including reconfiguring workspaces at the warehouses to accommodate a smoother workflow (and possibly recruit more collections-specific volunteers), refining a comprehensive object processing checklist accessible to all relevant staff, and completing a useful inventory of the Museum's exhibitry (pedestals, vitrines, wall units, gallery tech, and other installation items). Much credit goes to Jennifer Dickerson, Curatorial Services Manager, and Katie Grim, Collections Registrar, for these system improvements.

Exhibitions and Programs

First Comes Love: Courtship in the Victorian Era, will continue on view through June 29, 2025. The exhibition is accompanied by a small booklet. Staff are experimenting with a method to make the highlight exhibitions in Heritage House easier to navigate by using an eye-catching icon alongside all relevant artifacts. Visitors essentially engage in a "scavenger hunt" to find the themed exhibition integrated throughout the rooms via the icon. Special programs will highlight this exhibition throughout its run.

Work continues with our contract exhibition designer, Riggs Ward Design, to develop the exhibitions that will reopen the main museum. A major upcoming step will be gathering the interviews/oral histories that will be at the core of the immigration exhibition. Pending finalization of an agreement for videography and video-editing of the interviews, the interviews should begin in May or soon after.

Insect Fair on April 26, 2025, was a surprise in many ways. In spite of cool, wet weather, the event experienced record attendance of 16,000, of which the Museum records about 25% as an estimation of its own direct contacts. The two butterfly tents were, as usual, as busy as they could possibly be. Teresa Woodard, Kim Cobb, and Ian Wright developed a diverse and fun array of activities and handouts. The Riverside Museum Associates rang up many retail sales and banked the butterfly tent ticket revenue to support future educational programs. We thank all who were able to volunteer, especially those there the entire day.

April and May were busy. Volunteers are often needed! Please see below regarding upcoming programs. Note that when Heritage House closes for the summer at the end of June, the schedule will be quieter.

Date	Program	Location	Volunteer opportunity?
May 31, 2025	LiTEArature, Peter Rabbit/Beatrix Potter, 2:00 – 4:00. Ticketed event.	Heritage House	Maybe
June 5, 2025	Artswalk, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., Pride Month button-making	Main Street	Yes
June 6, 2025	Nights with the Museum, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., Eric Focht speaking about avocados, their origin, and research on them at UCR	Main Library, Community Room	No
June 20, 2025	Movies on the Lawn, <i>Father of the Bride</i> (1950), gates open 8:00, screening at 8:30	Heritage House	Maybe
June 28, 2025	Concert on the occasion of the site closing for the season	Heritage House	Maybe
July 3, 2025	Artswalk, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., star theme, confetti cannon	Main Street	Yes

Budget

Financial challenges facing the City have increased since last reporting. In addition to managed hiring, which has delayed the Museum's recruitments, spending that is not mission-critical is unlikely to be approved. Major items contributing to this issue are declining sales tax revenue due to nationwide issues and unbudgeted overtime in the Police and Fire departments.

Staffing

As noted elsewhere in this meeting package, the Museum is adapting to vacancies in three important fulltime positions. Some tasks are being pushed farther forward in the schedules.

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.

Be on the lookout for Chantal Downing, Institutional Advancement Coordinator, to form an *ad hoc* reopening planning steering team. A representative from the Museum Board will be important on this team. It is hoped that it may morph after the reopening into a standing team for marketing and promotion of Museum programs, a team that has otherwise been difficult to recruit.

Committee / Team	Meeting interval	Role	Chair	Next meeting
Collections	Every other second Wednesday	Advising on collections activity	Jennifer Dickerson	July 9, 2025
Harada House Project Team	Every other first Friday	Programs and communications regarding Harada House	Acting chair Robyn Peterson	June 6, 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	July 2, 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

The following information is a repeat, but staff do need everyone to spread the word as much as possible about our need for individuals wishing to be trained to be touring docents in Heritage House. If you ever wonder why the house is open only three afternoons a week, it is solely this reason: we do not have enough touring docents to advertise longer hours. Event volunteers and collections-support volunteers are also desired. 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

The new Web Developer shared by the Museum and the Library will start in June. Michael Risher's chief responsibility for the Museum will be completion of the new website. Michael will

“live” in the Department of Marketing and Communications but will attend Museum staff meetings.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

The activities of the Museum of Riverside align with the Strategic Priority, “Arts, Culture and Recreation.” Specific 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 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.