



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE: AUGUST 27, 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

Now that the main Museum site is in the hands of the general contractor, BNBuilders, staff receive updates and gain site access through the contractors. A standing meeting occurs weekly. Steps taken at the site that are publicly noticeable include some of the protective measures taken to safeguard historic features (for example, the wrapping on the marble columns on the portico facing Mission Inn Avenue). Other work under way includes crew safety training sessions, utility management prior to demolition work, and salvage of historic materials.

Historic Houses

The architectural and engineering design team, K+R Design, has completed the schematic phase of the design work and is moving efficiently through the planning process. Staff anticipate a sense of project costs by the end of 2025.

Staff received good news from the National Park Service in the form of an invitation to submit project costs against the Save America's Treasures grant that we had previously understood to be ineligible. This means we may be able to draw as much as half or more of the original \$500,000 grant prior to its expiration, rather than losing the entire grant.

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

Heritage House will reopen on Friday, September 5, 2025. Over the summer, progress occurred on several smaller-scale projects, including new wrought iron site fencing and painting in the retail shop and carriage house kitchen. Staff continue to work with a graphic design company on a package of wayfinding signage, although implementation of this signage package remains unfunded at this time.

Collections

Collections work continues on the long-term projects. Curatorial Services Manager Jennifer Dickerson is guiding this work, which involves all the program staff and sometimes other staff as well. Clearing space for short-term storage of main Museum building salvage is one of many factors that influence this work.

Exhibitions and Programs

Quackery & Cures in the Victorian Age will open when Heritage House reopens on September 5, 2025. The theme relates well to Black Veil, which will occur later in the season, and the exhibition will be accompanied by several fascinating special programs.

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 Museum continues to enjoy strong visitation at many of its programs. We are pleased to report a 48% increase in in-person service to the community in 2024-2025 compared to the prior year, and a strong increase in digital reach as well (about 25%).

The summer lull in programming will soon be over, and an active schedule awaits in September.

Date	Program	Location	Volunteer opportunity?
September 4, 2025	Artswalk, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., on a theme relating to <i>Quackery & Cures</i>	Main Library, Community Room	No
September 5, 2025	Nights with the Museum, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. (NOTE: new earlier time), Kevin Street from Public Works tells us about sewers!	Main Library, Community Room	No
September 6, 2025	<i>Quackery & Cures</i> opening weekend with special after-tour activities	Heritage House	Maybe
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.	Heritage House	Yes

Budget

Financial challenges continue for the City, which affect the Museum most in its ability to recruit to fill its vacant positions. The process of preparing the biennial budget for FYs 2026-2028 has begun. Note that this will be biennium during which the main Museum reopens. Staff anticipate notable impacts upon our budget, primarily in staffing.

Staffing

Existing staff continue to work hard to absorb workload in the absence of multiple full-time positions. However, we're pleased to report that a candidate has accepted our offer of the position of Archivist. We will announce the individual's name when a start date has been set.

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. Staff hope that all board members have chosen an advisory team and receive notices regarding meetings. The most active committees meet every other month.

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 the Marketing Advisory Team)	Expect meetings with increasing frequency up to reopening	All aspects of reopening events and communications; general public communications, PR, website	Chantal Downing	TBD – soon
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

Do you know a recent retiree looking for something to do? Or someone who wants to exercise their minds learning something new? We are eager for you to help us spread the word about our need for volunteers, especially those willing to train to be touring docents or work our exciting special events. 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, anticipates that we will be able to launch our website within the next few weeks.

We hope you have noticed features and advertisements about the Museum in the *Raincross Gazette* and KVCR. Both outlets have become important to us lately in spreading the word about programs and progress.

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