



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE: FEBRUARY 4, 2026**
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, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, AND ADVOCACY

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, marketing and communications, and advocacy.

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, marketing and communications, and advocacy.

DISCUSSION:

Main Museum Renovation

Work on site continues with about a quarter of the two-year schedule having passed. Salvage, demolition, hazardous material abatement, and utility work continue to occupy BNBuilders' time. Weekly meetings that include City staff, contractors, and architects will continue through the end of the project. Some historic salvage has been approved by City Council for donation to the Old Riverside Foundation and the Riverside Arts Council, and the physical transfer of this salvage is under way. Staff are amplifying their focus on reopening exhibition planning; Fixtures, Furniture, and Equipment (FF&E); and grand reopening plans.

Historic Houses

The architectural and engineering design team, K+R Design, has delivered 50% construction documents (CDs) and formal construction cost estimates. The latter do not reflect funding gaps as severe as staff feared, but additional fundraising will need to occur. The process of selecting a pre-qualified panel of general contractors is nearing completion.

Heritage House has benefitted from a few small upgrades and fixes that most would not notice but that improve long-term preservation. Staff are continuing to strategize on how to fund and

pursue such larger needs as site wayfinding signage, lighting in the carriage house, upgrades to the restrooms, and other pending projects.

Collections

New Archivist Steve Mandeville-Gamble has, in a short time, made notable improvements in the storage and documentation of the Harada family archives. Other projects have also moved forward quite a bit, including inventory, rehousing, tribal consultations relating to repatriation, and preparation of digital records for eventual release through a public portal on the Museum's new website.

Exhibitions and Programs

Quackery & Cures in the Victorian Age closed after a successful run on November 23, 2025. The annual Black Veil event occurred successfully, as well as very well-attended events, including Moon Festival, Dark Carnival, Christmas Open House, and many others. A couple programs have had to be cancelled due to rain, although in our climate, we do not complain about rain.

As noted above, work continues with our contract exhibition designer, Riggs Ward Design, on the complex process of developing the four exhibitions that will reopen the main museum. All plans are at 100% design documents (DDs). A particularly time-intensive aspect of the planning has been recording and editing over a dozen interviews of the im/migration exhibition.

A kick-off meeting occurred in November 2025 with Holden Films, and they have begun their work on the feature-length Harada documentary. They are currently reviewing archival material, preparing the first draft of a script, and have recently received a list of potential interviewees.

We regretted the need to cancel our special December 6, 2025, program, which was to feature Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson and author Susan Straight. This ticketed event faced some stiff competition from other early holiday season opportunities.

Staff have recently settled on a series of programs to acknowledge the 250th of the United States. The list includes modifications to existing programs, such as Ice Cream Social, and additional programs, such as a special summer tour opportunity at Heritage House in July when we are normally closed, a special patriotic Movies on the Lawn feature, a talk by our own Curator of Natural History Ian Wright on the ecology of our area 250 years ago, and more. Be on the lookout for that program line-up soon.

Nights with the Museum is returning on a new schedule: the fourth Thursday from February through October, beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Date	Program	Location	Volunteer opportunity?
February 5, 2026	Artswalk, 6:00–9:00 p.m. The activity will relate to Black History Month.	Main Street	Yes
February 6-8 and 13-15, 2026	Special Valentine's Day tours, including special programs on Saturday, February 14	Heritage House	Yes – for docents
February 11, 2026	Main Museum public hard hat tour, 4:00 p.m. Registration required; first-come, first-served; strictly limited to 15.	Main Museum	No

February 26, 2026	Nights with the Museum returns! Museum staff Ian Wright and Katie Grim will share their experience at an important international natural history conference in Japan, 6:00 p.m.	Main Library Community Room	No
March 26, 2026	Heads up for a special Nights with the Museum featuring a panel of leading Riverside women, "Shedding Light on Women's Little-Known History in Riverside," 6:00 p.m.	Main Library Community Room	No

Budget

Preparation of the biennial budget for FYs 2026-2028 continues. Staff have developed and submitted a post-reopening budget for City management's consideration.

The Museum is tracking well on the current fiscal year budget. The City's revenue challenges remain, although have abated to a degree.

The following are the Museum's preliminary year General Fund numbers through December 31, 2025:

Expenditure Category	Original Appropriation	Appropriation Adjustments	Total Appropriation	Encumbered	Expenditures through December 31, 2025
Personnel	\$1,945,423	\$9,468	\$1,954,891	\$0	\$753,050
Non-personnel	\$631,123	\$43,012	\$674,135	\$104,267	\$255,552
Special Programs	\$65,000	\$105,251	\$170,251	\$9,825	\$23,770
Charges from others	\$296,795	\$3,281	\$300,076	\$0	\$121,673
Museum Debt	\$34,187	\$0	\$34,187	\$0	\$14,245
Total	\$2,972,528	\$161,012	\$3,133,540	\$114,092	\$1,168,290

Staffing

Interviews are scheduled for a Marketing and Outreach Assistant, reporting to Chantal Downing, Institutional Advancement Coordinator. When that position is filled and the new person onboarded, we will initiate the recruitment for a Curator of History.

New interns have joined the staff from CBU and UCR, and new volunteers are signing up as well, placed to match their interests as staff are available to host them.

Advisory Teams

Please contact Robyn Peterson if you have not yet signed up for an advisory team.

Committee / Team	Meeting interval	Role	Chair	Next meeting
Collections	Every other second Wednesday	Advising on collections activity	Jennifer Dickerson	March 11, 2026
Harada House Project Team	Every other first Friday	Programs and communications regarding Harada House	Acting chair Robyn Peterson	February 6, 2026
Grand Reopening Steering Team (to evolve after 2027 into)	Expect meetings to increase in	All aspects of reopening events and communications; general public	Chantal Downing	To be announced

the Marketing Advisory Team)	frequency up to reopening	communications, PR, website		
Programs	Every other first Wednesday	Program development, implementation, and coordination with partners	Jennifer Dickerson	March 4, 2026
Immigration exhibition Community Advisory Team – MEMBERSHIP CLOSED	Intermittent beginning late January 2025	Advising during planning for the immigration exhibition, estimated to be two years	Robyn Peterson	Pre-set meeting scheduled has concluded. Next meeting TBD as exhibition finalization 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. This applies as well to those you may wish to recommend to become volunteers.

Marketing and Communications

Staff hope that Board members have taken a look through our new website. Work is ongoing to build out the site and add content, which will include construction updates, current and past exhibitions, collection information, program calendars, and donor recognition, among other content.

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 shared them.

Advocacy

We encourage you to stay in touch with your Councilmember. Please note: Councilmembers' support staff do change from time to time, so check their individual webpages for ways to make appointments or share announcements. Please sign up for all seven Councilmembers' newsletters. This can be done individually through each of the Councilmembers' web pages: <https://riversideca.gov/council>.

Spreading the word about Museum programs is a tremendous help to the Museum. Please let us know if you need flyers, links, or other assistance in order to share updates with others.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

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