



# Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

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**TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD**                      **DATE: APRIL 22, 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. Delays have mounted to the point that Museum staff are now shifting grand reopening planning to the spring of 2028 rather than the fall of 2027. Disappointing as this is, staff plan to make the most of the extra time. Sub-grade work continues, including building the elevator pit and preparing for the erection of steel for the addition. Utilities work and attending to potentially hazardous discoveries also continue, as do weekly meetings. Staff continues with reopening exhibition development; reopening event planning; and finalizing how to acquire all that will be needed in the way of fixtures, furniture, and equipment (FF&E).

Staff and the contractors facilitated a hard hat tour by California Baptist University architecture students. We anticipate offering first-come, first-served hard hat tours to the public every six to eight weeks, depending on what can safely be observed on site.

**Historic Houses**

The architectural and engineering design team, K+R Design, has delivered 50% construction documents (CDs) for Harada House. This is a correction of the last director's report when 100% CDs were reported. The 100% documents are just about ready but await revision based on a

newly required soils evaluation. Executing an amendment to the architects' agreement for design of the garage has also caused delays. The milestone meeting scheduled for February 27, 2026, has been postponed until after the 100% CDs are available and reviewed.

Staff are strategizing on fundraising to fill the gap that exists between available Harada House project funding and probable needs, estimated to be about \$500,000. Two grant applications have been submitted as of the date this report was prepared.

Pruning in the orange grove and other tree trimming took place as planned at Heritage House. Some preliminary work has occurred in advance of making improvements to the restrooms. No other progress has been made on Heritage House projects such as wayfinding signage and installing lighting in the carriage house due to the Museum being so short-staffed.

### Collections

Improvements continue to be made in storage, with the biggest leaps forward being in archives and in preparing space for consultations with tribal representatives in connection with repatriation requests. Improvements have also been made in the percentage of Harada Family Archives scanned and individual records created.

Planning for the twice annual exhibitions at Heritage House is always an opportunity for improvements to be made in selected collection records, as featured objects are photographed and condition-reported, and their records reviewed for accuracy and completeness.

### Exhibitions and Programs

At Heritage House, *A Victorian Heritage: Riverside's Butterfly Man* opened successfully on March 13, 2026. The exhibition about Captain Charles Montagu Dammers was curated by Curator of Natural History Ian Wright. It will remain on view through the seasonal closure of the house on June 28, 2026. Special programs will accompany this exhibition.

The Museum is offering special programs in conjunction with the country's 250<sup>th</sup>, which will include enhancements to Ice Cream Social on May 17, opening the house on July 5 for special tours, a special Movies on the Lawn screening on July 24, and others. Please see the program list below for the first few.

We're pleased to report a very successful Nights with the Museum last month on the topic of local women's history. It featured a distinguished panel of speakers for an engaged crowd of 72 people. This year's literature-themed tea for children also went well, although dominated by adults revisiting their childhoods.

Staff are about ready to offer two presentations in the context of the California Preservation Foundation's annual conference, which will be in Riverside this year, 6-9 May 2026. A collaborative session including the main Museum will take place the morning of May 8, and a collaborative session including Harada House will take place the afternoon of the same day.

One of our biggest events of the year is coming up fast. Insect Fair will take place on April 25, 2026, in the same location behind the Main Library where it has been for the past few years. This is an "all hands-on deck" event serving thousands in the area. Not long after will be Ice Cream Social on May 17. Due to extra advertising around the country's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Ice Cream Social is again expected to break a record. Thrifty Ice Cream is sponsoring the event along with the Riverside Museum Associates. Your help as a volunteer at either or both events would be greatly appreciated!

A reminder: Nights with the Museum has resumed on a **new schedule**: the fourth Thursday from February through October, beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Date	Program	Location	Volunteer opportunity?
April 23, 2026	Nights with the Museum featuring Ian Wright, "A Field Guide to the Butterflies of Riverside," 6:00–7:00 p.m.	Main Library Community Room	No
April 25, 2026	Insect Fair, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.	Main Library "back yard"	Yes!
May 3, 2026	First Sunday, 1:00–4:00 p.m., with Captain Carl and his mobile tidepool	Main Library breezeway	Possibly
May 7, 2026	Artswalk, 6:00–9:00 p.m., featuring Dolores Huerta and farmworkers' rights	Main Street	Possibly
May 8, 2026	Two sessions featuring Museum sites are included in the California Preservation Foundation's conference line-up, 8:45 (main Museum), 3:45 (Harada House)	Culver Center and Convention Center	No
May 8, 2026	Chinatown publication event, 6:00 p.m.	Heritage House	No
May 9, 2026	Hike near the Dammers plaque site at Victoria and Mary with Ian Wright, 9:00–11:00 a.m.	Start at the little park at this location	No
May 17, 2026	Ice Cream Social, noon–4:00 p.m. Extras to celebrate the country's 250 <sup>th</sup> .	Heritage House	Yes!
May 28, 2026	Nights with the Museum, Dr. Shunlin Tsang on the topic of public health services, 6:00–7:30 p.m.	Main Library Community Room	No

Budget

A separate report on the forthcoming biennial budget for FYs 2026-2028 is in this meeting's packet. Current fiscal year expenditures are tracking at or under budget.

Staffing

An offer has been accepted by a new Marketing and Outreach Assistant, who will report to Chantal Downing, Institutional Advancement Coordinator. When that person's start date is confirmed, we'll share the name and background information. In late May or early June, we will initiate the recruitment for a Curator of History. The Exhibition Designer's position has been deferred for the foreseeable future in the context of City revenue challenges.

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	May 13, 2026
Harada House Project Team	Every other first Friday	Programs and communications regarding Harada House	Acting chair Robyn Peterson	June 5, 2026
Grand Reopening Steering Team (to evolve after 2027 into the Marketing Advisory Team)	Expect meetings to increase in frequency up to reopening	All aspects of reopening events, communications, PR, and website	Chantal Downing	Meeting approximately monthly

Programs	Every other first Wednesday	Program development, implementation, and coordination with partners	Jennifer Dickerson	May 6, 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 as new volunteers.

Marketing and Communications

Please check in with our new website often. We are building content continually and striving to keep the calendar populated with upcoming programs. Recent additions to the website include the lead donor list for the Harada House Campaign and a page on sustainability measures adopted in the context of the main Museum construction project.

Advocacy

Please 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