



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE: APRIL 23, 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 bid from BNBuilders of Irvine, California, was approved by City Council on April 8, 2025. A kick-off meeting will occur between City/Museum staff and the contractors after the construction agreement is executed. Staff continue to anticipate that work on site will begin by early summer if not before.

The final push to clear the building is complete. A full photographic record of the empty building was prepared for the Museum by Michael Elderman.

Historic Houses

At the time of the preparation of this report, the agreement with the new architectural design team for Harada House and the Harada House Interpretive Center is anticipated to go to Council in May. We aim to take the Harada House project documentarian project forward as soon as we can secure commitments for enough funding to initiate the work on a sound footing.

Projects at Heritage House that are moving along include installing the new site fencing, designing a package of wayfinding signage, and improvements to the carriage house office space (flooring, repainting, and new appliances).

Collections

Collections work has focused on storage reconfiguration to accommodate the remaining objects and specimens moved from the main Museum, documentation upgrades, support for the development of *First Comes Love: Courtship in the Victorian Era*, and preparation of a workspace for the eventual incoming Archivist. Work also continues on the backlog of processing of accessions, deaccessions, and non-permanent collection acquisitions.

Exhibitions and Programs

First Comes Love: Courtship in the Victorian Era, will be on view through June 29, 2025. It was curated by former Curator of History Taylor Bythewood-Porter. The exhibition is accompanied by a small booklet. 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.

April and May are busy months for programs, and a couple of them could definitely benefit from volunteer assistance. Please see below.

Date	Program	Volunteer opportunity?
April 26, 2025	Insect Fair behind the Main Library, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Definitely
May 1, 2025	Artswalk, Main Street, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., paper floral garlands	Yes
May 2, 2025	Nights with the Museum, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., Main Library Community Room, Dr. Norm Ellstrand, “Sex on the Kitchen Table: The Romance of Plants and Your Food”	No
May 3, 2025	Nature hike with Curator of Natural History Ian Wright at Castlevue Park, 9:00 a.m.	No
May 4, 2025	First Sunday, Captain Carl and his mobile tidepool, Main Library, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.	Yes
May 4, 2025	Victorian tea in the Heritage House gardens, 2:00 – 4:00	Yes
May 16, 2025	Movies on the Lawn, <i>It Happened One Night</i> (1934), at Heritage House; gate opens at 7:30, screening at 8:00	No
May 18, 2025	Ice Cream Social, noon – 4:00 p.m., Heritage House	Definitely

Budget

Financial challenges facing the City require departments to be frugal and, in some cases, defer hiring. At present, the Museum does not anticipate major impact on our path forward but is exercising some belt-tightening.

The following are the Museum’s preliminary year numbers through December 31, 2024:

Expenditure Category	Original Appropriation	Appropriation Adjustments	Total Appropriation	Encumbered	Expenditures through December 31, 2024
Personnel	\$1,733,188	\$0	\$1,733,188	\$0	\$623,857
Non-personnel	\$716,356	\$49,454	\$765,810	\$147,189	\$219,734
Grants and	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Capital Projects					
Special Programs	\$55,000	\$101,350	\$156,350	\$24,784	\$9,055
Charges from others	\$287,942	\$0	\$287,942	\$0	\$146,889
Museum Debt	\$34,093	\$0	\$34,093	\$0	\$17,046
Total	\$2,826,579	\$150,805	\$2,977,384	\$171,973	\$1,286,451

Staffing

Recruitment for the new Exhibition Designer remains paused until next fiscal year. Taylor Bythewood-Porter is no longer a member of the Museum staff. Managed hiring has been instituted within the City, which means we are as yet unsure when we can resume the recruitment for our Archivist or initiate the recruitment for a new Curator of History.

Advisory Teams

The standing staff-level advisory teams are open to new members, who need not be Board members. An exception is the Community Advisory Team for the immigration exhibition, which is complete at five members.

Committee / Team	Meeting interval	Role	Chair	Next meeting
Collections	Every other second Wednesday	Advising on collections activity	Jennifer Dickerson	Next meeting May 14, 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	May 7, 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 Museum has a particular need for individuals wishing to be trained to be a touring docent.

The City has adopted a new software system for the management of its volunteer program. Information on the City's Cervis volunteer portal is included in the link below. **Please note:** talk to Teresa Woodard about available volunteer opportunities and create your profile on Cervis before proceeding to additional steps.

Profiles are created here: <https://riversideca.cervistech.com>. All volunteers must undergo a Livescan, and there is no charge for the Livescan to the prospective volunteer.

Marketing and Communications

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

Chantal Downing continues to refine processes for communication as well as the priorities for where we place our communications. We always benefit from hearing from you when and where you see our ads, promotions, and flyers.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

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

Prepared by: Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director