

Downtown is
Calling

Good
Times
Await



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In keeping with recommended protocols for dealing with the COVID-19 virus aka Coronavirus, RDP luncheons and most meetings are canceled until further notice.



December 2020

Bulletin

Riverside Downtown Business Improvement District

News from RDP

2020 Holiday Window Decorating Contest

In keeping with the 'Christmas Lights at the Inn' theme, RDP is holding its annual window decorating contest. We are adding 5 more prizes to the contest; 1st prize \$100, 2nd prize \$75, 3rd prize \$50, and now 5 new prizes of \$25 each for Honorable Mention. Let's 'light up' the downtown storefronts. Winners will be announced on December 22nd on Facebook. To be eligible, you need to complete an entry form so the independent judges can visit your business. Email janice@riversidedowntown.org or call 951-781-7335 to get an entry form.

Sorry – entrants are restricted to those in the Downtown BID.

2021 Action Plan and Security Efforts

RDP committed to preparing a strategic plan to cover 2020 to 2024. However the COVID-19 pandemic derailed traditional strategic planning with in-person meetings restricted and uncertainty about longer term planning. Following other examples, it was decided to forego traditional strategic planning and instead develop an Action Plan for 2021 that would focus on specific actions that RDP could undertake to deal with the disruptions caused by the pandemic and build a base for recovery.


A copy of the 2021 Action Plan is available on the RDP website. With the new normal now shaped by COVID-19 and the decline in downtown workforce population, the number one goal now and in 2021 is to draw people downtown.

RDP's main focus now and for 2021 is on drawing people downtown. The most frequent complaint heard from businesses and visitors is the disruption caused by homeless and transients. Many of the homeless are dealing with mental problems and exhibit disturbing behaviors that are sometimes frightening

in nature. The transient population frequently bothers businesses and their patrons with panhandling and harassment. Both groups are service resistant and non-receptive to efforts of the Office of Homeless Services.

RDP is working with the City and other stakeholders to determine what specific actions should and can be taken with respect to homeless and transients. In the interim, RDP has taken the following steps:

1. Reallocated the \$50,000 that was previously allocated by the RDP Board towards the StreetPlus Safety Patrol (canceled by the City) to a new external security patrol from 4 pm to Midnight on Main Street from 5th to 9th, University Avenue from Main to Lime, and then Lime Street from University to Mission Inn. That patrol started in August and is funded until June 30, 2021.
2. Applied for and received two CARES Act grants for \$15,000 from the City and \$10,000 from the County to cover extra external security patrols for the remainder of 2020. One patrol started October 24th from 11 am to 7 pm and will run to the end of the calendar year. Another patrol started on Thanksgiving with flexible hours and will also run to the end of the year. RDP will pursue additional grants for 2021 security.
3. Allocated an additional \$50,000 to be used for an external security patrol to respond to problems within other areas of the BID. That patrol will start in December and is funded until June 30, 2021.

Business input on security issues is encouraged. Please contact Janice Penner at the RDP office. 

Update on the Cheech

The Riverside Art Museum joins our fellow downtown businesses during these unprecedented times to transition and innovate to serve our community. We see the work that you all are doing alongside us, and we commend you, knowing the time, energy, courage, and creativity needed to get through this.

At RAM, we have worked to turn much of our art programming virtual using online platforms like Zoom. Some of our talks have attracted viewership from across the U.S.

Believe it or not, Carlos Santana—yes, the Carlos Santana—will be in conversation with Cheech Marin via Zoom on Thursday, December 17 at 6 pm. Cheech asked Carlos to do this talk as part of a series of conversations organized by Unidos in partnership with RAM called “En Diálogo: Unidos Presents | Unveiling Chicano Art and Culture, A Preview of The Cheech.” All proceeds from this conversation and three others will benefit an inaugural exhibition of the work of Einar and Jamex De La Torre at the forthcoming Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture of the Riverside Art Museum slated to open late Fall 2021. Also not to be missed is LA Originals—Photographer Estevan Oriol and Artist Mister Cartoon in conversation on January 21, 6 pm to 8 pm via Zoom. Tickets for each conversation are \$25. Please register in advance at endialogo.unidosfor.org or visit www.riversideartmuseum.org/endialogo.

Unidos, a group committed to furthering the Chicano Latino Community in Riverside, has raised over \$250,000 for The Cheech since coming together in December 2017. “I am grateful to Unidos for their support of The Cheech,” says Cheech Marin. “I’m now a fundraiser for life to ensure the center will continue to advocate for Chicano artists and share the importance of the Chicano school of art. I deeply appreciate all of the work to raise the money that is required to organize and promote programming, operations, and more.”

The Cheech is a public-private partnership between the City of Riverside, Cheech Marin, and the Riverside Art Museum to rehabilitate the soon to be vacant main City library in downtown Riverside and turn it into a world-class

Chicano art museum. Cheech is donating his preeminent Chicano art collection to RAM, who will partner with Cheech and the City to operate The Cheech. Approximately \$14.5 million dollars of private and State money has been raised to date by the parties to rehabilitate and renovate the building and then turn it into a museum. The majority of the funds will be spent on basic repairs to the building. However, no City funds will be used for the rehabilitation and renovation of the library. This summer, the City received competitive bids on the contract to renovate the future home of The Cheech; the lowest qualified bidder has been identified and Council will vote to award this contract within the next couple of months. Pursuant to a management agreement negotiated between City and RAM representatives that will also be considered by the City Council this fall, the City will provide a management fee to RAM to operate The Cheech for up to 20 years. This structure was laid out in a Memorandum of Understanding approved by the City, Cheech, and RAM almost three years ago in May 2017, reconfirmed in a second MOU in Fall 2018, and again reconfirmed in a third MOU July 2020.

The benefits of The Cheech to Riverside are many. A recent updated economic impact study by economist John Husing estimates that The Cheech will result in approximately \$23 million dollars annually of desperately needed direct spending to the Riverside economy. Over ten years that amount is \$300 million dollars. The Cheech has brought international attention to Riverside through media coverage and Cheech Marin’s own efforts to promote Riverside as what he describes as the “next big art town.”

Stay up to date by following the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture of the Riverside Art Museum on Facebook (www.facebook.com/thecheechcenter), Instagram (@thecheechcenter), and Twitter (@thecheechcenter).

Contributed by Drew Oberjurgue, Executive Director



Holiday Greetings from RDP Board and Staff

Please enjoy these complimentary calendars; What’s Up with RDP in 2021 and 2021 RDP Pocket Calendar. 



COUNCIL CORNER

Ward One Council Update

Contributed by Councilwoman Erin Edwards

This December brings a holiday season like no other. Nine months into a global pandemic, we find ourselves especially in need of the cheer and light that usually radiates from our Downtown this time of year. Businesses must pivot just to keep their doors open, residents yearn to see friends and family, and—while we all remain hopeful for a vaccine in the near future—it is still impossible to know exactly how long COVID will be with us.

As the Ward 1 councilmember, I have seen how hard everyone has worked over the last nine months to innovate and to support each other. I know this has not been easy.

Despite all the challenges, Downtown businesses and residents continue to embody the spirit of joy and generosity that makes our city so unique. This season will still be merry and bright because of you.

Here are some highlights that will keep us safe, healthy, and joyful in the months to come:

- **'Tis the Season for Christmas lights at the Mission Inn!** The Mission Inn will decorate with a beautiful, but scaled back, holiday light display on the exterior and interior of the hotel. While there will not be a switch-on ceremony this year, the City is finding ways for families to celebrate safely by:
 - Highlighting local businesses and vendors on social media;
 - Releasing coloring pages from local artists throughout the season;
 - Displaying festive décor around the Mission Inn;
 - Asking visitors to enjoy the displays while following current State protocols.
- In November, **the City partnered with Curative to stand up three self-administered COVID-19 testing sites across Riverside. If you haven't already, make sure to check out the** Downtown Curative kiosk near City Hall! Additionally, a mobile testing van is making its way to parks and public buildings throughout the city. **Visit** www.Riversideca.gov.

gov/testing to schedule your test. It's easy, painless, and free.

Frequent testing (once or twice a week) helps us fight COVID-19 in our community by 1) giving us an accurate picture of the spread of COVID; 2) helping us catch asymptomatic cases quickly, and 3) ensuring that business and school buildings can safely reopen as fast as possible.

- **City Council approved the Riverside Downtown Partnership's BID levy for the coming year.** RDP has gone above and beyond to increase security in the Downtown core during this unprecedented moment. RDP's work is commendable, and I look forward to continuing to work together.
- Innovation is part of Riverside's DNA, even in a pandemic. City Council recently approved funding for a **feasibility study for TIG/m's electric streetcar**. This study will include robust community outreach, studies on the best potential tram routes, and an analysis of demand. This feasibility study is expected to be complete by June 2021.
- The Arts sustain us by documenting our history, shining a light on our day-to-day realities, and giving us a vision for the future. I'm excited to share that the management agreement with **The Cheech is coming before the Finance Committee (1 pm on Dec. 9th) and Budget Engagement Commission (5 pm on Dec. 10th).** Share your input on this important project by e-mailing: City_Clerk@Riversideca.gov.

Please don't hesitate to call me at (951) 783-7811, or e-mail me at eedwards@riversideca.gov with any questions or concerns.

As we look toward an even brighter new year, my office wishes you and your families a very happy holiday season. 🎄



Ward Two Council Update

Contributed by Councilman Andy Melendrez

Season's Greetings!

Annual Nuestra Navidad Breakfast: Latino Network will once again be hosting their Virtual Annual Nuestra Navidad Breakfast on Wednesday, December 9th, from 7:30 am – 9:00 am. This year due to the COVID-19 the Nuestra Navidad Breakfast will be held digitally. For details about sponsorships and ads or to purchase tickets contact Araceli Ruiz at info@riversidelatinonetwork.org or at 951-394-2634.

CURATIVE Mobile Van Test Sites: The City of Riverside has partnered with Curative to help provide additional COVID-19 test site locations throughout our neighborhoods.

All tests are completely free and results come back on average within 24 hours. For testing information or to schedule your appointment visit www.curative.com. If you or someone you know needs help with transportation services the Coalition for Black Health and Wellness has partnered with the Black Chamber of Commerce to provide local residents free transportation services to COVID-19 testing sites throughout the area.

continued on next page



WARD TWO from page 3

To schedule your appointment please reach out to Chynna Clarke at chynna@riversidecountybcc.org or call (951) 877-0179.

Riverside Arts Academy Flash Mob! It's that time of year, once again! The Riverside Arts Academy is hosting its annual Flash Mob performance this year on December 3rd at around 5:00 pm. We will be honoring a selected military family from the March Air Reserve Base with gifts and we will have amazing performances from our RAAMP students! BUT, we need your help!! We are now accepting monetary donations and gift cards that will go directly toward the military family! Join us in honoring our local heroes by donating at www.riversideartsacademy.com/make-a-donation. You can watch the digital flash mob event via Facebook at www.facebook.com/riversideartsacademy/.

Miracle on Main Street: The Miracle on Main Street Christmas Event will change due to COVID-19. Several of our Riverside businesses and non-profit organizations are spearheading the Miracle on Main Street event and are

dedicated to spread holiday cheer and provide resources to local families in need. The event will be held on Saturday, December 12, 2020 at the Stratton Community Center, 2008 Martin Luther King Blvd. from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. For additional details or to become a sponsor call 951-295-5968 or visit www.miracleonmain.org.

Ward 2 Development: As we look for ways to strengthen our economy, provide better quality of life, and build on local assets we look to our partners and community members to help us create the appropriate atmosphere.

- Bobby Bonds Turf Replacement: Our Parks And Recreations Department issued a request for proposal for the replacement of the soccer/football field turf at Bobby Bonds Park. We are excited to announce that construction will begin the first quarter of 2021!

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy New Year! 

News from the Riverside Philharmonic

Music is one of the first heralds of the approaching holiday season. It's an integral part of memories: turning on the radio or a CD to set the background mood while getting ready for company, opening presents, enjoying the company of family and friends or appreciating the many musical offerings on the downtown walking mall.

This year, why not start the season with cheerful holiday-appropriate trumpet, tuba, trombone, and horn music? Since health compliance closure of the traditional venue, Riverside County Philharmonic is delivering quality music up-close and personal by sharing the joyful and lively Brass Quintet's special studio recording. This seasonal video is available for your on-demand listening pleasure via the Philharmonic's YouTube channel.

This studio session is a gift to the community, like previous Philharmonic holiday concerts have been for many years, from William Hoskins. For many years, Hoskins has sponsored the annual concert in memory of his wife, Sylvia Sweet Stebler Hoskins. "She loved music; she loved seeing performers perform; she loved being part of the emotional response of the audience," he said, "and she loved knowing that the music performed will live forever."

The December concerts traditionally concluded with the audience participation of singing holiday carols: You are encouraged to sing wherever you are. As written in the Bible, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine," so listen to the Brass Quintet, sing like nobody's listening, and be merry!

"Music has the power to lift us up, to heal us," said Maestro Tomasz Golka. Something we all may need more of this holiday season.

Want even more? Click on the new "Living Room Concerts" featured on the YouTube channel to enjoy soloists on piano, flute, oboe, strings ... and a discussion by Maestro Golka about Saab automobiles (yes, really).

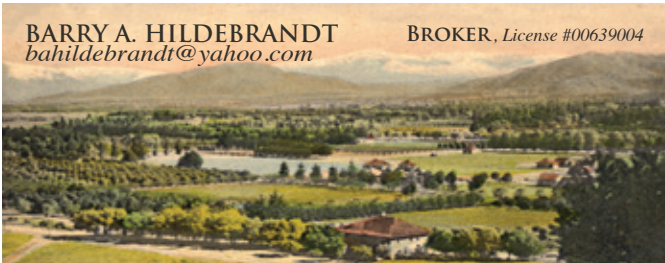
Find more information on Riverside Philharmonic at:
info@riversidephilharmonic.org
www.RiversidePhilharmonic.org
Facebook: RivPhilharmonic
YouTube: Riverside Philharmonic

Contributed by the Riverside Philharmonic



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RiversidePublicUtilities.com



Arts Corner: Riverside Community Arts Association

Riverside Community Arts Association is a nonprofit organization located in downtown Riverside and was established in 1989. Its iconic Lemon Street storefront gallery and retail space has been home to many significant exhibitions, including those featuring collaborations with local schools and international sister cities. Founder and Executive Director Mark Schooley has a knack for developing those collaborations, as well as for nurturing new talent. Many unsure and hesitant artists have gotten their start with Schooley's kindness and encouragement.

Then in March, like with so many other businesses, the membership organization had to close its doors and await an uncertain future.

"Over the years we've had our challenges," said Schooley. "Because of the dedication of our community of artists we've always been able to survive. This is the first time we have truly been knocked down."

The organization has been greatly assisted through CARES Act funding, as well as through ongoing support from the City of Riverside Arts and Culture grant. But the doors to the gallery have remained closed.

"I think that what I have missed the most is planning and designing the shows," said Schooley, who explained that he has spent most of the pandemic creating art.

The planner in Schooley kept focusing on the show that he wanted to curate, though. His thought was to base an exhibition around work that was created by RCAA members

during the pandemic. Each piece would not necessarily have to reflect anything that has been happening in the world. It could be an artist's view of their backyard if that is where they have been spending their time.

RCAA began the process of preparing their space for a limited opening of the show that would be called "20/20 Vision." They installed a plexiglass screen at their retail counter, along with social distancing markers, signage and hand sanitizer stations. On November 19 they began allowing appointments to be made during limited hours.

"We're only letting a maximum of six people inside at a time," said Schooley. "And we've gone from being open five days a week to three, and just three hours each day."

He said that they received some incredible pieces that tell a unique story about the past eight months.

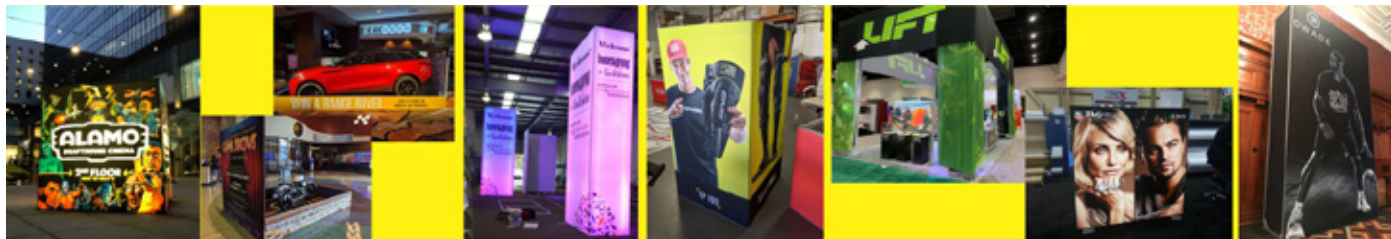
The organization has also reimaged their website. Work from previous exhibits can be viewed and also purchased. Pieces donated by renowned local artist Chick Curtis can also be purchased online as part of an ongoing fundraiser.

For more information, visit rcaaarts.org. Call (951) 682-6737 or email rcaaarts@sbcglobal.net to make an appointment to view "20/20 Vision," which runs through January 16.

*Contributed by Patrick Brien, Executive Director,
Riverside Arts Council*



Business Spotlight: Creative Print and Visual Displays



At Creative Print & Visual Displays (CPVD), it is our passion to bring your business and graphic concept to life, making you look better than all of your competitors!

CPVD has become a premier specialist for all things large format digital and dye-sub fabric print and marketing exhibits, including in-house custom fabrication of reusable and adjustable Silicone Edge Graphic (SEG) display systems. While we have become known for our work with Tradeshow, Special Event & Retail Display Builders, as well as working directly with Schools, Museums, Supermarkets, Casinos and numerous local businesses and organizations.

We are here to help you with all of your large format digital and dye sub print and marketing displays; including, but not limited to:

- Indoor & Outdoor Vinyl Banners, any size!
- Adhesive Wall Graphics
- Window Graphics
- Rigid and Rollable Materials

- Vehicle Wraps
- Construction Mesh Fence Banners
- Pole, Building and Billboard Banners
- Dye-Sub Fabric SEG Graphics
- Custom Table Throws and Runners
- Event Backdrops to Full Tradeshow Displays
- Pop-ups, Retractable, Flags & Canopies

To get a better idea of all the projects we have worked on, please check out our photo gallery by visiting: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1IJ39ugxW7g_6Hqhn6_2toqJ2W8TOHBZ.

From full site-surveys to start to finish project management to production and install, my cell is on 24/7 to help you look better than your competition. Contact us today for a free quote or to schedule a site visit at your next project.

*Tom Borba, Owner, Creative Print & Visual Displays
951-295-8086 cell / Tom@CPVDisplays.com / www.CPVDisplays.com*



Business Spotlight: Salvaged Treasures

We're Salvaged Treasures and we just opened up our shop in March, 2020 at 3580 Main Street. We've been in business for nearly 8 years, doing various markets and being vendors in some of the local vintage stores, and jumped at the chance to open our own shop, where we could showcase our vintage, custom farmhouse, home decor and so much more. We also offer custom upholstery, custom handmade furniture, painting, restoration and small furniture repair.

3580 Main Street, 909-261-1555, www.salvaged-treasures.com

[Facebook.com/ salvaged-treasures-riverside-ca](https://www.facebook.com/salvaged-treasures-riverside-ca)



BUSINESS BUZZ

What Have We Learned? Business Lessons From COVID-19

by Brian Wallace, *business.com* writer

Do the work now so your business will still be around later.

Running your business as smoothly as possible is crucial right now, as more companies seem to go out of business every day. It's time to pause and reflect, and then move forward with as much information as possible. You need to streamline your business while still knowing when it's time to ask for outside help.

In short, there's little room for error if you want your business to come out the other side, and there are a few things you should be doing to keep your business going.

1. Cybersecurity should be top of mind.

Because more people are working from home now, more personal devices are being used for business purposes than ever before. Companies that had work-from-home (WFH) and bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policies in place before the pandemic had an easy transition, but companies that never expected to allow this kind of flexibility have been thrust into it unprepared.

We've learned since the start of the pandemic that hacking and phishing attempts are way up. This is because hackers know more people are working from home using unsecured devices, but it's also because they understand human psychology enough to know that we aren't thinking very rationally right now.

Hacking activity increased 37% between February and March this year. In 2018, 81% of security incidents were tied to weak or stolen passwords, but a complete lack of security protocols due to the chaos of the pandemic is tied to the current rise.

As companies find their bearings, security protocols for WFH situations should be the first thing they work out. Ignacio De Marco gives these tips for businesses:

- Consistently update and patch all your systems.
- Make sure all sensitive data is encrypted.

- Develop zero-trust networks in which employees only have access to what they need to do their jobs.
- Develop a BYOD policy, and only extend the privilege to those who are willing and able to follow it.
- Teach your employees about security practices to reduce human error.

Whether your company continues to allow WFH and BYOD after the pandemic or not, it's important to establish policies for the appropriate protocol, in case they become necessary again and because employees should always be mindful of security concerns.

2. Maintaining customer relationships is crucial right now.

Customer churn costs businesses \$136 billion a year in the United States alone, and 34% of that churn is involuntary. It costs far more to secure new customers than it does to keep existing customers – and finding new customers during a pandemic and economic recession isn't what you should be resting your business hopes and dreams on.

There are many steps in reducing customer churn. Reducing involuntary customer churn may be as simple as figuring out why payments fail and trying to fix that. Most customers don't know their payment hasn't gone through until they have a lapse in service, so trying to recoup failed payments and reconnect with willing customers is the first step here.

When it comes to decreasing customer churn from dissatisfied customers, Ari Rabban has some tips:

- Empower customer service representatives to ditch the script and engage meaningfully with customers.
- Give customer service reps autonomy to make decisions.
- Train employees to really know and understand the products they are selling.

- Ask dissatisfied customers for feedback when they do leave so you know what to fix.

Preventing customers from leaving is crucial in the economic climate the pandemic has caused. Businesses need to keep their customer pipelines strong if they are going to make it out of this intact.

3. Your website and marketing should always be up to snuff.

Your business website is your lifeline right now. Customers are checking for changes in hours and procedures – even to see whether your business is still open or has gone under – long before they get into their cars and head your way (or order from you online). Websites are the new real estate now that there's little to no foot traffic to sustain businesses. It's more important than ever to make sure that your website loads, the information is accurate and up to date, and you have email marketing protocol to apprise customers of changes.

Best practices dictate that your website should load in three seconds or less; nine seconds more than that has been shown to cause a bounce rate of 123%. Your hosting provider is the foundation of your website, so if you aren't using the right hosting provider, it could be adversely affecting your loading speed.

You also need to keep your website up to date, complete with any changes in your hours or procedures. Having a way to disseminate that information to your customer base is equally crucial. This is where choosing an email marketing service comes into play.

Constant Contact and Mailchimp are pretty standard, but you have a lot of other options here. An email newsletter is a great way to let your customers know about not only changes in hours and procedures, but also your specials or events, which can be lifelines to struggling businesses right now. For every dollar spent on email marketing, the return is \$45, which is an ROI of 4,400%.

4. Sometimes, your website just needs a redesign.

If you've done the work and realize it's time for a website redesign, Andrei Klubnikin has some tips:

- Look at your metrics to determine which content works best. Take that as a clue to what your customers want, and plan thoughtfully around that.
- Study all feedback you've gotten about your brand and website, and rebrand accordingly.

- Set goals, such as speeding up your load times, and then measure your progress as you work to improve.
- Look at your competitors' sites for things you like and things they do better.

Especially if your entire business is online, it's paramount for your website to function properly, as that is your digital (and only) real estate. You can't afford poor load times or unhappy customers, especially right now when everyone is sitting at home, ordering things online.

James Warner notes some important points about business websites:

- It takes 0.05 seconds for a customer to decide, based on their experience with your website, whether they will buy from you.
- The amount of time a customer spends on your website is an important metric in determining whether your website is consumer-friendly.
- Telling your company's story in depth adds authenticity, which is important when customers are deciding whether to shop at your business.
- An optimized website is easier for customers to find and use.

Make sure your business is still here after the recession.

There is a lot of information out there for businesses that are struggling because of the pandemic and subsequent economic downturn. Not all of it is applicable to all businesses, but there are plenty of things you can do right now to ensure your business is still around when the pandemic passes.

Now is the time to do any redesigns or rebranding you need, and to remember and refocus on your business's core strengths. If you do the work now, your company will emerge from the chaos leaner and stronger than before, putting you in a good position to survive the next economic downturn or to thrive through the economic recovery (hopefully both).

Dig deep, get back to basics, and fix all the things you have been putting off. Your company's survival may depend on these steps for months or even years to come.

Source: *Business.com*



RDP Welcomes New Businesses to Downtown

5620 Tx Lincoln Arlington LLC • Cheba Hut (Restaurant) • Dolan Mental Health
 Flip Flop Investors • Homeaid Inland Empire • Inland Equity Community Land Trust
 Jams, Inc (Professional Services) • Jennifer Henry (Skin Care) • Joseph Rochowicz Stampweis
 Juan Hernandez (Business Services) • Latino Network • Lions Property Management & Attendant
 Livi Zulema Collins (Business Services) • Lucinda Perez (Food)
 Mario Padilla (Cleaning Supply and Service) • Novas Creative Candles
 Paint Your Pet Party IE (Arts and Crafts) • Private Practice Therapist • Sanoka Relics
 Shaniah Stoot (Broker) • Tiesha Williams Artistry (Skin Care)
 Virginia Pawluk (Skin Care) • The Glittery Dragon (Arts and Crafts)



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Press deadline is the 15th of
each month prior to publication.

For Downtown News Alerts email
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RDP Facebook Page

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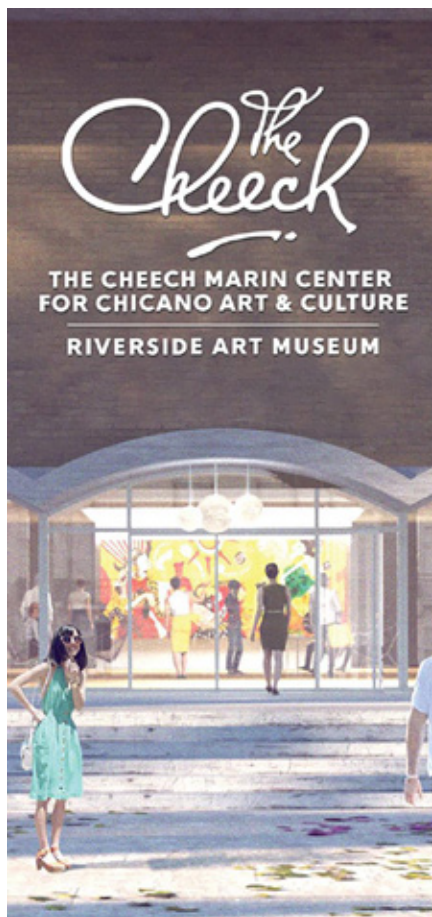
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**THE CHEECH
WILL HAVE A
\$300 MILLION
ECONOMIC
IMPACT
OVER 10 YEARS
IN RIVERSIDE**

Arts are key to
Riverside's
economic recovery!
#ArtsMatterRiverside