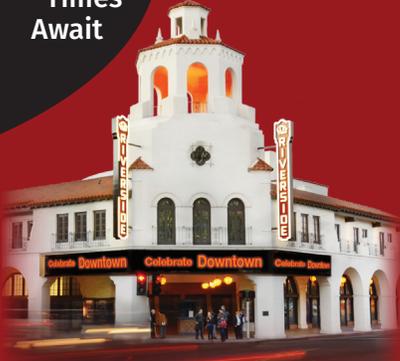


Downtown is
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Good
Times
Await



July 2025

BD Bulletin

Riverside Downtown Business Improvement District

Changes to City of Riverside Sign Code

Riverside's City Council adopted sign development standards in 2007 to address adverse impacts of unregulated signs on the visual character and economic prosperity of the City. Targeted updates are underway to the sign code to clarify existing standards and help yield high quality permanent signs (e.g. standards for blade signs, creative sign construction, and lighting techniques). Minimal changes are proposed for the Temporary Sign rules to clarify window signs and transparency, including screening of storage or equipment areas.

The sign code allows the following temporary signs: banners, balloon arches, and portable A-frame signs. The approved temporary signs can be up for 30 consecutive days, twice a year, not to exceed 60 consecutive days. The exception to this rule is during the holiday period starting the week before Thanksgiving and ending January 2 when the signs can be up for longer. Feather flags, inflatables, animated/moving signs, off-site advertising, and advertising statuary/mascots are strictly prohibited. Posters to promote an event are not considered to be window signage as long as they are temporary and removed after a week or so.

Businesses are allowed one temporary banner per street frontage. It must be securely attached to a wall or window and can take up to 25% of the applicable wall space or window. Businesses are allowed one portable sign but they cannot be placed in the public right of way. However businesses who are located on the Main Street Pedestrian Mall are allowed to place a portable sign by their business. The portable signs can be six square feet in area and 36 inches in height. One balloon arch per establishment is allowed as well which must be securely fastened to the building and not exceed the height of

the building. In addition, each individual balloon cannot be more than 24 inches in diameter; otherwise it is considered to be an inflatable sign, which is not permitted.

The sign code allows for one window sign per public entrance. They can be directly on or within 24 inches of the window's surface, and can be a maximum of 25% of each window's area. Businesses do need to obtain a permit for window signs by using the City's temporary sign permit process to ensure code compliance is being met. Applying for and receiving a temporary sign permit is free, and an individual can either fill out the application online or go to City Hall's Third Floor One Stop Shop and submit the application over the counter. Applications submitted in person are approved there while online applications can take 1 to 3 business days for approval. There are no time limits for the window signs, however businesses need to submit an application that they have one and the signs can be kept up all year as long as the requirements are being met.

The updates to the sign code have gone through the City's Land Use Committee as well as the Planning Commission before going to City Council on June 24th. Several information meetings have been held for businesses to learn more about the current temporary sign standards for businesses, and to receive any feedback on sign rules and regulations. City staff is currently working on a handbook that will provide detail on what is and is not allowed for permanent and temporary signs, as well as best practices for sign design.

For more information, contact the City of Riverside's Community and Economic Development Department Planning Division at 951-826-5371. 

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Business Buzz: 14 Ways to Improve Your Local Marketing Strategy

Join us for the RDP luncheon at Noon on Tuesday, July 22, 2025 at The Lobby Riverside for a presentation on Riverside Community Players by Charlotte McKenzie
Call the RDP office at 951-781-7335 for reservations.



July Events

Fourth of July Spectacular

Celebrate America's independence with The City of Riverside Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department with a spectacular array of fireworks at two separate locations:

- La Sierra Park (5215 La Sierra Avenue)
- Mount Rubidoux (Mount Rubidoux Drive at 9th St.)

Shows begin promptly at 9 pm. No access will be available at Carlson Dog Park or Mount Rubidoux after 7 am on July 4th.

Want to be closer? Evergreen Memorial Historic Cemetery offers **Founders' Day Front Row Fireworks** for \$10 for adults, and free for kids 13 and under. Attendees can enjoy food vendors, live music, as well as free activities for the kids in a safe, family friendly location. To purchase tickets, go to <https://evergreen-cemetery.info/event/front-row-fireworks/>



Riverside Home and Backyard Show

Celebrating nearly thirty years of success, the Riverside Home & Backyard Show returns to downtown Riverside and the Riverside Convention Center. Attendees can view the latest in home improvement and remodeling on Friday, July 11th from 12 pm to 6 pm, Saturday, July 12th from 10 am to 6 pm, and Sunday July 13th from 10 am to 5 pm. Admission is free.

International Food Festival

The International Food Festival returns to downtown Riverside. It will take place Saturday, July 26th and Sunday, July 27th from 11 am to 10 pm on Mission Inn Avenue from Orange Street to Lime Street. Offerings will include global street food, fusion dishes, authentic international flavors, plus craft beer and handcrafted cocktails. The event will also have retail and cultural craft vendors, along with live music and performances and carnival attractions.

For more information, check <https://www.facebook.com/familymarketco/>.

Supervisor's Message - UCR's Growth Is Riverside's Growth: A Tribute to Chancellor Kim Wilcox

Contributed by Supervisor Jose Medina



As a longtime educator and current Riverside County Supervisor, I've had the privilege of witnessing the incredible transformation of both UCR and Downtown Riverside over the past decade. At the center of that transformation has been Chancellor Kim A. Wilcox.

When Chancellor Wilcox arrived at UCR in 2013, he brought with him a bold vision of access, excellence, and community. Over the next

eleven years, that vision became reality. Graduation rates rose dramatically. Research funding soared past \$200 million. The university welcomed new faculty, added over 2.4 million square feet of infrastructure, and was admitted into the prestigious Association of American Universities.

But Chancellor Wilcox's leadership did more than shape the future of a campus; it reshaped the region. The growth of UCR went hand in hand with the revitalization of Downtown Riverside. As enrollment increased and national recognition grew, so too did the energy and investment in our city's core. Today, more students, faculty, and families live, work, and explore downtown than ever before. This strengthens our small businesses, enriches our cultural life, and fuels innovation through UCR's ExCITE incubator, which supports 30 companies and accelerates the growth of high-tech startups in Riverside.

As a longtime Riverside resident and the Riverside County Supervisor representing District 1, home to the

Riverside Downtown Partnership, I've seen firsthand how the presence and success of UCR directly support our local economy, delivering an estimated \$2.3 billion in regional economic impact.

Chancellor Wilcox understood that a public university should not be an ivory tower. It should be a partner in progress.

"We owe Chancellor Wilcox a debt of gratitude. His leadership lifted UCR, and in doing so, lifted Riverside. He made sure our city and campus grew together, side by side, for the benefit of all." — Supervisor José Medina

On June 10, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors had the honor of recognizing Chancellor Wilcox for his outstanding service. As we reflected on his accomplishments, we also celebrated the lasting impact he made, not only on UCR but on the Inland Empire as a whole.

His legacy lives on in every student who found a path at UCR, in every Riverside business that found new customers, and in every partnership built between the university and the community.

Thank you, Chancellor Wilcox, for believing in this university, and for believing in Riverside.



Mayor's Message - Riverside County's Mental Health Crisis Meets a Turning Point — Thanks to You

Contributed by Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson



For decades, lack of accessible mental health care has loomed over California like a slow-moving storm. Accelerated by the pandemic, the cracks in our behavioral health system widened into chasms, deepening a crisis that has spilled onto our streets, into our jails, and overwhelmed our emergency

departments.

The result? A heartbreaking cycle of suffering. People in acute mental distress are too often left without options—languishing in places that were never designed to provide proper care. Jails, sidewalks, and ERs have become de facto psychiatric wards. It's a system that fails everyone: patients, families, first responders, and the broader community.

But now, for the first time in decades change is on the horizon. Not just incremental policy shifts or layers of new bureaucracy, but tangible investment in our community. And it's all thanks to you, the voters.

Earlier this month, Riverside University Health System (RUHS) was awarded more than \$333 million in Proposition 1 dollars (a ballot initiative approved by voters in March 2024). This award included funding for two projects.

- **RUHS Behavioral Health Center** – A transformative \$184 million investment to fund a new behavioral health wellness center in Moreno Valley. At the heart of that project: a 100-bed inpatient psychiatric facility that will serve adults, adolescents, and for the first time in Riverside County, children ages 12 and under.
- **Harmony Haven Children and Youth Wellness Center** - A \$149.7 million endeavor that will fund the county's first 30-bed Adolescent Residential Substance Use Disorder (SUD) facility, a 16-bed

Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility, a 15-station Mental Health Urgent Care center, and a comprehensive outpatient clinic for behavioral health and substance use services.

To understand just how monumental this is, consider that, until now, Riverside County—home to more than 2.5 million people—had just 77 public acute care inpatient psychiatric beds. Only 12 were designated for teens. None for children.

Since 2019, RUHS has added more than 569 step-down beds (at one point, producing more than all other 57 California counties combined), but acute psychiatric beds remained painfully scarce. On any given day, an estimated 30 patients at RUHS Medical Center ETS/ITS alone, not even including other emergency departments in the county, require urgent psychiatric admission but have nowhere to go. For children, the situation is even bleaker; parents are forced to seek help outside the county, navigating an already traumatic experience with added logistical and emotional strain.

Now, that changes.

These new facilities represent a pivotal step forward, bringing compassion, capacity, and infrastructure back into our mental health system. When paired with the U.S. Supreme Court's 2023 Grants Pass decision which equips cities with clearer tools to address unsheltered homelessness, and the passage of Proposition 36 which expands law enforcement's ability to respond, we are well positioned to address the intertwined crises of homelessness and untreated mental illness.

The road ahead won't be easy and there is still much work to do. But thanks to your vote, Riverside County is no longer stuck in neutral. We're building a system that meets people where they are, and offers them a path to recovery, dignity, and hope.

And it couldn't come soon enough.



COUNCIL CORNER

Ward One Council Update

Contributed by Councilmember Philip Falcone

Never would we have thought we would enjoy the sound of construction noise more than at the Museum of Riverside site at Mission Inn Avenue and Orange Street! In July 2017 the City Council voted to shutter the museum for a three-year reset and renovation. Unfortunately, due to one obstacle after another, the renovation and expansion portion of the project hobbled on for



nearly a decade. I am proud to report that we have halted the year-after-year cycle of obstacles and delays and have officially begun construction on this Riverside institution which has been at this corner, albeit in different buildings, since 1924.

On June 27, 2025, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to officially start the task of protecting and persevering the 1912 main structure while demolishing the midcentury additions to later



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reconstruct a larger, more useful building addition. Historic features like a central skylight which has been boarded up for at least 50 years will be reintroduced. The architectural design of the new addition is modern and does not mimic the design of the 1912 building. This is done on purpose and is considered the “proper” way of adding on to 100-year-old buildings. Architecture is on a continuum and while we may prefer 1912 architecture to 2025 architecture, it is not right to recreate or copy a bygone era as that causes a false sense of history. This practice is utilized across Europe with an ultra-modern building constructed right against a building from the 1700s and no one thinks twice about it. The untrained eye should be able to look at buildings and have a general idea of which era they were constructed—and the museum’s new addition will be clearly modern.

The construction will take approximately two years and will utilize parking lot 16, in the rear of the museum, as a

construction yard. Additional on-street parking stalls were added to Orange Street last year in anticipation of the temporary closure of lot 16.

As do so many Riversiders, I have deep personal connections to this natural history museum and many childhood memories such as the mountain lion exhibit, the cyclops cat, or the Charles Shulz “Peanuts” exhibition. Now it is time for an overhaul to ensure the next hundred years of Riversiders have a museum to be proud of. The Museum of Riverside is looking forward to opening day in 2027 when they can join their neighboring museums such as The Cheech, the Riverside Art Museum, the California Museum of Photography, UCR Arts, the Center for Social Justice and Civil Liberties and nearly half a dozen more in our Arts and Culture District.

So, enjoy the sound of progress in the heart of our downtown!



COUNCIL CORNER

Ward Two Council Update

Contributed by Councilmember Clarissa Cervantes



Happy July, Riverside! Be sure to stay cool this summer and be informed on cooling centers that are throughout Riverside. Keep your loved ones, friends and pets safe during extreme heat days and learn more about where to cool down as well as community pool hours at Riversideca.gov.

New Ward 2 Mural at Zacatecas Cafe! We had the absolute pleasure of teaming up with artist Robert Gomez on a stunning new mural at Zacatecas Cafe, celebrating the rich Indigenous and Latinx roots that are such a big part of Riverside’s history. Huge thanks to Jon and Vicky Medina for welcoming this project to their iconic cafe, and to our amazing sponsors: UNIDOS for La Causa, Latino Network, Athens Services, Altura Credit



Union, Senator Sabrina Cervantes, and Supervisor Jose Medina, for making it all possible. Their love and support for our community truly brought this vision to life.

Be sure to check out more of Robert’s incredible work on Instagram [@dytch66](https://www.instagram.com/dytch66), you won’t be disappointed! And while you’re at it, be extra sure to have some delicious food at Zacatecas Cafe located at 3767 Iowa Ave!

Riverside’s Artist in Residency Program Update: We’re excited to share that the Riverside Arts Council has finalized artist selections for the new Artist in Residency Pilot Program and official announcements will be coming in the next few weeks! This two-year pilot project will feature six talented artists whose residencies will focus on building meaningful partnerships with local neighborhoods and communities. The goal is to highlight the power of art in civic life, encouraging creative engagement and community connection. As part of the program, each ward in Riverside will receive two unique murals created in a variety of artistic mediums!

Stay tuned—big things are on the way! If you are interested in learning more about any of the projects or events in Ward 2, please call my office at 951-826-5419 or email me at ccervantes@riversideca.gov.



Arts Corner - Riverside Artswalk - Artist Spotlight: J Villa Murillo

Contributed by Rachael Dzikonski, Executive Director – Riverside Arts Council

The heat is here to stay in sunny southern California but that does not stop our community from gathering and celebrating the arts and culture in our region. July starts off with 2 days of back-to-back celebrations with the 4th of July and incredible fireworks displays throughout the city just after the First Thursday Riverside Artswalk. Riverside Artswalk will be in full swing with new summertime exhibits and festivities, and Main Street will come alive with a new band performing on the Benjamin Franklin stage along with

artisan vendors selling their handmade original artworks and artists painting and creating live artwork. This month the Riverside Artswalk Artist Spotlight is J Villa Murillo, a regular live painter who will be demonstrating his technique during this month’s event.

J Villa Murillo is an artist who was born in Ensenada, MX and raised in Lake Elsinore, CA. J has been creative since birth and spent the summers of his early years in front of

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Engagement often comes down to creating a sense of connection and relevance, even in small, unexpected ways. Aled Nelmes, CEO and founder of Lumen SEO, shared how subtle, psychology-driven cues can encourage people to interact with a business more naturally and meaningfully.

“My favorite [local marketing] examples have been a local café putting chairs and tables outside even if it’s raining to suggest they’re open from a distance,” Nelmes shared. “I’ve also seen a village shop offer a ‘postcode discount,’ the irony being that everyone within a 10-mile radius is within that postcode, but the consumer feels a sense of exclusivity nonetheless. It’s those psychological tricks that I’d suggest for long-term success over high-spend ads.”

3. Get involved in your community.

Local marketing isn’t just about advertising; it’s also about building real relationships. Find opportunities to show up in your neighborhood and support causes your customers care about. Attend local events, volunteer for community projects, or donate branded prizes to raffles and contests. These simple actions can improve your visibility and give people a reason to return to your business.

Williamson encourages businesses to make community involvement a part of their brand. “Sponsor the local high school football team. Host an educational seminar for other small businesses,” Williamson suggested.

However, Williamson emphasized that true engagement takes more than just writing a check. “Community involvement builds visibility and credibility, both of which are essential for long-term loyalty.”

4. Take advantage of local directories.

One of the easiest ways to drive local traffic is to ensure your business appears in local search results. You can do this by claiming and optimizing your listings on platforms like Google Business, Yelp and other industry-specific directories.

“Local directories are a powerful digital storefront,” Williamson said. “Ensuring your business is listed — and that the listing is accurate and up-to-date — boosts your visibility in local search and signals credibility to both search engines and customers.”

5. Gather and post testimonials.

Positive customer reviews are among the most effective tools for building trust in your local community. While people are often quick to share negative feedback, positive experiences can be just as powerful, especially when you make it easy for customers to share them.

Encourage satisfied customers to leave reviews on platforms like Google, Yelp or Facebook. If you receive great customer feedback in person, via email or on social media, ask if you can share it on your website or marketing materials. The more visible your happy customers are, the more likely others are to give your business a try.

6. Use local media.

Don’t underestimate the power of local media, especially in smaller communities. Local newspapers, radio stations and TV shows often have loyal, engaged audiences, and they’re always looking for stories with a community appeal.

Pitch a newsworthy event, sponsor a themed segment, or offer to be a local expert in your field. When you appear or are featured on local media, you can raise awareness, build credibility and drive more foot traffic to your business.

7. Run local search engine marketing campaigns.

Search engine marketing (SEM) is a powerful way to reach potential customers in your area. With tools like Google Ads, you can create targeted campaigns that drive both online traffic and in-person visits to your brick-and-mortar location.

Pay-per-click (PPC) ads and other location-based targeting options help ensure your business appears when local customers conduct searches for relevant products or services. These campaigns can help you get the most bang for your marketing dollar by reaching the right audience at the right time.

Use Bluetooth beacons to send real-time promotions, coupons or alerts to the smartphones of nearby or in-store customers. This is a great way to drive foot traffic to your store and boost engagement.

8. Work on your search engine optimization (SEO).

Search engine optimization, especially organic SEO, helps your business show up in search results without relying only on paid ads. For best SEO results, you’ll need to create valuable content for your audience and optimize your website.

“Good local SEO ensures that when someone searches ‘best bakery near me’ or ‘community bank in Austin,’ you show up,” Williamson explained. “That means optimizing your Google Business Profile, using localized keywords, and ensuring your website is technically sound and mobile-friendly.”

Organic SEO takes time and consistent effort, and it could take months before you see real results. However, the long-term benefits can be enormous. As search engines continually change and refine how they present relevant local results, like nearby restaurants, service providers and shops, your SEO strategy becomes even more valuable.

9. Use social media to engage the audience.

Social media is a great way to connect with your local community in a way that feels both professional and personal. For best results, focus your social media marketing on the platforms your audience already uses, whether that’s Facebook, Instagram or Nextdoor, and use those social channels to answer followers’ questions, share updates and start conversations.

Consistent, authentic interaction can help build trust, help sustain and grow customer relationships, and help nearby customers remember your business.

10. Run contests or promotions.

Contests and promotions can be great tools for engaging a local audience. You can even go viral with a contest that captures interest quickly online. Get creative with your approach, and offer prizes your ideal customers will actually value. You can also tie promotions to local events, holidays or community causes to build goodwill and brand awareness.

Nelmes advises brands to reward more participants with tiered incentives instead of offering a single big prize.

“I recommend offering a 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize to increase the number of entries,” Nelmes shared. “You will also enjoy stronger word-of-mouth benefits following the competition,

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with more winners advocating for your now more generous brand.”

11. Establish yourself as an authority.

Positioning yourself as a trusted expert in your field can help you stand out from local competitors and build lasting customer loyalty. To do this, create relevant, helpful content on your website, blog and email newsletter that answers common customer questions or explains industry trends. This strategy builds credibility, supports your SEO efforts, and helps you stand out from the competition.

Nelmes points out that becoming an authority or noted expert doesn't have to mean winning national awards. In a smaller local market, being the go-to provider in your niche can carry more value than broader recognition.

“Establishing yourself as an authority varies in importance depending on the size of your local area,” Nelmes noted. “You can gain authority in hairdressing by being the only hairdresser in your area, and therefore can often waste time trying to win national awards instead of developing new services to offer to your regular customers to increase lifetime value.”

12. Cross-promote with other local businesses.

Cross-promotion is a simple, mutually beneficial strategy where two or more businesses market each other to their customers. It helps each business expand its reach, attract new clientele and boost sales, all without significantly increasing marketing costs.

“There's a reason theme parks place drink stands next to salty food restaurants; they grow each other's demand, like a symbiotic relationship,” Nelmes explained. “The potential wins here are huge, and therefore collaborating with local brands is essential and very important.”

Nelmes encourages small businesses to think creatively about potential local partners. “In an ideal scenario, you would be located close to those partners, but a great social media campaign can bring brands closer together than ever,” Nelmes said.

He also recommends tying these partnerships to specific seasons or events to maximize engagement. “For example, a florist could partner with a local deli to offer a competition in which customers could win a Valentine's Day experience. Watch how seasonality, social media and the power of two brands create more local interest than you've ever seen.”

13. Host or sponsor local events.

Hosting or sponsoring local events is a great way to raise brand awareness and connect with your community in person. Whether it's a seminar, fundraiser, festival booth or neighborhood celebration, these gatherings let you meet potential customers, share your brand's personality and create positive experiences people associate with your business.

Choose an event that appeals to your target audience and matches your brand values. You're not just providing entertainment or information — you're building relationships and trust that can lead to long-term customer loyalty.

14. Build a mobile-friendly website.

Local customers often discover businesses through mobile searches, whether they're looking for a place to eat, shop or book a service. A mobile-friendly website helps provide a great user experience and is also a key factor in

SEO, as search engines prioritize responsive, fast-loading websites.

Follow responsive web design best practices to ensure a smooth user experience across devices. Your site should automatically adjust to different screen sizes, with quick load times, clear navigation, clickable buttons and easy-to-read content.

Nelmes emphasized that mobile-friendly sites help consumers make more purchases.

“Whilst having a mobile-friendly website varies in importance depending on your target audience, you can't deny that for all demographics, it's becoming increasingly important, especially as users become more confident paying for and booking things online via their smartphone,” Nelmes explained.

A responsive, mobile-friendly website makes it easier for potential customers to take action, whether that's calling your business, visiting your location or making a purchase on the spot.

Source: <https://www.business.com/articles/ways-to-improve-local-marketing/>



RDP Welcomes New Businesses to Downtown

Erika Martinez (Counseling)

Lori Business (General Merchandise)

SoCal United Legal and Attorney Services

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Wise Mind Counseling Services Inc.

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VIP Guest Reception \$100 • General Admission \$75

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