



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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**Contact:**

Phil Pitchford

Public Information Officer

951-826-5975

[ppitchford@riversideca.gov](mailto:ppitchford@riversideca.gov)

## **City of Riverside Awarded Prestigious Helen Putnam Award for Economic Development Through the Arts for “The Cheech”**

*Award from League of California Cities recognizes partnerships, economic impact*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City of Riverside received the prestigious Helen Putnam Award for Economic Development Through the Arts for its role in the creation of The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art and Culture of the Riverside Art Museum.

The award from the League of California Cities, announced during the League’s annual conference in Sacramento, recognizes statewide excellent in government.

“The Helen Putnam Award is the latest recognition for what has become a statewide destination for art lovers and people interested in learning more about Chicano culture,” said Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson, who accepted the award with City Manager Mike Futrell. “It was very gratifying to share this unique asset with conference attendees from around the state.”

The City conceived the idea for The Cheech as a way to breathe new life into a building that had for decades been the Main Library downtown. An innovative partnership with the Riverside Art Museum (RAM) and the actor and comedian Cheech Marin, who donated his massive and impressive collection of Chicano art, has created a nationally recognized center for the arts in downtown Riverside.

The Cheech honors the building’s historic architecture and captures the spirit of its prior use as a place of learning, sharing ideas and inspiring. It also is an economic driver, bringing people from around the world to experience Marin’s eclectic and engaging collection of paintings, sculptures and other works of art, the world’s most renowned Chicano arts collection in private hands.

This public-private partnership created an art museum with a very unique focus, with a Chicano arts collection unrivaled at the national level and around the world, telling the story of Latinos in Riverside and across the nation.

“The Cheech is a gem in the crown of downtown Riverside,” said Mayor Pro Tem Erin Edwards, who represents the area. “Its unique focus on Chicano art and culture has drawn people to our city who

might not otherwise have had a reason to learn about our history, our beautiful downtown and our high quality of life.”

The City worked with the State of California to secure a \$9 million commitment to rehabilitate the building, converting and reimagining an old mid-century interior as a modern arts space. RAM raised \$3 million towards renovations and initial operating costs.

The result was an economic impact to the downtown that benefits hotels, restaurants, and shops across the city. In its first year of operation, The Cheech had over 135,000 attendees. The Cheech had an impact of over \$5 million for the local Riverside economy in its first year.