



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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## City of Riverside Breaks Ground on Northside Agricultural Innovation Center

*Cutting edge technology to develop the future of farming in hotter and drier climate*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City of Riverside broke ground today (3/4) on the Northside Agricultural Innovation Center, which will demonstrate how sustainable, climate-resilient agricultural technologies can increase crop yields in the face of climate change while preparing the next generation of farmers.

The NAIC will be the first facility of its kind in the U.S., featuring solar-powered greenhouses and solar panels over farm fields that will harness the sun's energy, power the center and return up to 1 megawatt of renewable annually energy to the grid. The solar greenhouses will produce three times the yield of a typical farm, while using 80% less water.

Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson noted that the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Energy have recognized the NAIC as one of the top five ag projects in the US to help future proof farming. It will train at least 135 people each year and assist 6-10 new farmers and ag tech startups annually, launching 25 companies during the next ten years.

“This transformative, sustainable and innovative project will bring lasting benefits to Riverside’s Northside neighborhood,” Lock Dawson said. “It also will help us as a city, a region, a state and a nation be more resilient in growing food in an environment that is getting warmer and drier -- and to do it all with less water while creating renewable energy. We were on the cutting edge of ag 125 years ago when we exported the Washington navel orange using new refrigeration techniques. We continue to lead in the agri-tech space.”

The 8-acre site will feature safe routes for walking and biking, improving access to open spaces, along with a tree nursery, a community garden, a farmers’ market, and a carbon-sequestering orchard. NAIC will provide resources for sustainable living, local economic growth, and workforce development, as well as hands-on training for residents, including youth education programs.

With more than \$10 million in local, state, and private funding, the project will establish a state-of-the-art facility for sustainable agriculture training. It will offer educational opportunities for everyone from K-PhD students to the general public in the Northside.

“The center adds another game-changing new development to enhance our Northside community—the city’s oldest neighborhood,” said City Councilmember Philip Falcone, who represents the area. “In Riverside we care deeply about where we have been and where we are going. The NAIC is transforming a once-thriving farm into an innovative agricultural space of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that will lead the way in generating renewable energy, being prudent with our natural resources and leading the U.S. in sustainable agricultural innovation.”

The NAIC will feature 50,000 square feet of solar greenhouses; 14,000 square feet of solar panels over open farm fields; 14,000 square feet of a solar pole barn – a structure with a roof and no walls for gathering or a farmers’ market or a community gathering spot; a 30-plot community garden; 1.8 acres of agriculture fields; a walking trail and 450 new trees.

“This project is not just about transforming a piece of land; it’s about meaningful jobs and our economy,” City Manager Mike Futrell said. “It’s about transitioning from agriculture to climate smart ag and it’s about preparing for our future. This center will be more than just a place to learn; it will be a place where ideas are born, where businesses are launched, and where we can see the future of farming unfold before our very eyes.”