



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Aug. 2, 2021

Contact:

Robyn G. Peterson
Museum Director
rpeterson@riversideca.gov
(951) 826-5792

Preservation of Historic Harada House in Riverside Ensured with State Support

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – A \$7 million state budget allocation will ensure the structural rehabilitation of the Harada House, which is key to opening the National Historic Landmark to the public and sharing like never before the story of how a Japanese American family in downtown Riverside successfully fought against discrimination.

City officials gathered Monday (8/2) with Assemblymember José Medina, who shepherded the allocation through the state budget process, to celebrate the funding success and look forward to additional progress.

“This funding is crucial to the successful completion of the complex process of structural rehabilitation for Harada House,” Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson said. “This nationally important historic house will help tell the story of Riverside’s past and how the Harada’s brave actions set the stage for a better future for all Californians. Thank you to Assemblymember Medina and the state Legislature for making these additional resources available.”

A historic preservation architect will be selected this summer, and more than four years of work is expected to start next year, starting with the foundation and working upward through the structure using advanced technologies to preserve as much of the historic fabric of the house as possible.

The funding also ensures the completion of the Harada House Interpretive Center, which is next door to Harada House on Lemon Street in downtown Riverside.

“I am grateful that the Governor and Legislature recognized the importance of the Harada House to Riverside and to the entire State,” Medina said. “The Harada House memorializes both the triumphs of, and the injustices against, Japanese Americans. The social justice message at the heart of this house remains crucially relevant today.”

Harada House earned its National Historic Landmark status in 1990 because it had been the subject of a civil rights court case in 1916-1918, the People of the State of California v. Jukichi Harada et al., in which the Superior Court of California upheld the 14th Amendment rights of the American-born children of Japanese immigrants Jukichi and Ken Harada against California's Alien Land Law targeting Asians.

The Harada case was the first test in the United States of the constitutionality of these exclusionary property and immigration laws. Decades passed before alien land laws were repealed in California, but in 1918 the racially motivated criminal prosecution of Jukichi Harada ended in triumph for the Harada family.

“This is so meaningful -- the money, the investment, the work being done by the Museum of Riverside to share the Harada's story so that people around the country can learn from our history,” City Councilmember Erin Edwards said. “The ripple effects will be enormous.”

Harada House, the subject of this court case, was deeded to the City of Riverside in 2003 by Harada family heirs so that it could become a site for education and dialog relating to civil rights. However, termites, water incursion, and other factors caused the house to be deemed unsafe until a costly rehabilitation could take place.

“The state funding is transformative,” Museum of Riverside Director Robyn G. Peterson said. “It acknowledges the importance of proceeding with this project so that the Museum of Riverside may make Harada House and its relevant stories accessible to the public. Harada House remains as timely today as it was over a century ago, with its messages that go to the very heart of the ideal of ‘liberty and justice for all.’”

About the Museum of Riverside:

The Museum of Riverside, a department of the city of Riverside, holds a large multi-disciplinary collection relevant to the history, culture, and natural science of the region. Sites include the downtown Riverside main museum, Heritage House, Harada House, and Robinson House. All sites are temporarily closed for renovation, rehabilitation, or normal summer season closure. The Museum has a proud history of exhibitions, programs, and publications foregrounding local and regional achievement.

For the latest information and resources regarding COVID-19 -- www.RiversideCA.gov/COVID-19

###

