



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Feb. 7, 2025

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“The Cheech” Has Pumped More Than \$29 Million Into Riverside Economy

New study cites significant economic impact from Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture of the Riverside Art Museum pumped \$29 million into the Riverside economy in its first two years, making it a significant economic driver in the city and a magnet for tourists from outside the area.

The Cheech, as it is commonly known, drew 227,932 visitors to Riverside from June 2022 to June 2024. That figure – with nearly 90 percent of visitors coming from outside the area -- exceeded expectations and introduced Riverside to thousands of people who might not otherwise have visited.

“Partnerships are flourishing in Riverside, but few have proved more fruitful than the public-private moon shot we call The Cheech,” Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson said in her recent State of the City address. “And we have the data to prove it.”

Cheech Marin is one of the foremost collectors of Chicano art in the world. His extensive collection of Chicano art, including paintings, sculptures, photography, and video art, was donated to RAM for display in The Cheech. The Cheech is now a cultural hub that attracts visitors from all over the world, supporting local tourism, creating jobs, and contributing to Riverside's economic growth.

“I am so proud of these findings,” Marin said. “But I'm not surprised. For over 20 years, as my collection traveled the country, we saw museums experience record attendance when our exhibitions opened. I have always said that Riverside is the next great art town, and this study proves we are on our way.”

The study was done by Boules Consulting LLC of Costa Mesa, which relied on attendance data, economic metrics, operation records from The Cheech, and public records, such as hotel transient occupancy tax records. The City contracted with Boules Consulting for an independent review.

As part of the overall economic impact, The Cheech injected \$2.2 million into local restaurants, \$1.5 million into local retail stores and \$510,000 into local hotels, the study found. In addition to the impact on tourism, The Cheech has made significant contributions to local employment and tax revenue.

“This spending pattern underscores The Cheech's significant role as a cultural tourism driver, with non-local visitors consistently accounting for the majority of expenditures across all categories,” the study found. “The high proportion of nonlocal spending suggests that The Cheech is successfully attracting visitors from outside Riverside, contributing substantially to the local economy through tourism-related revenue.”

A benefit concert in May 2022 and the January 2023 ¡DESCUBRA! event drove higher demand than usual in the hospitality and transportation sectors, boosting hotel transient occupancy taxes that accrue to the City of Riverside by \$1.4 million, or 16.4 percent, compared to previous year.

“The Cheech has been a point of pride for Riversiders since it opened more than two years ago,” Mayor Pro Tem Sean Mill said. “Now we know that our investments are paying off, and The Cheech is helping to inject money into our local economy from outside the area.”

Construction and renovation of The Cheech – it’s in the city’s former Main Library – provided an economic boost of \$18 million. Media coverage of The Cheech, both on television and print, reached more than 14 million people, creating exposure valued at the minimum of as much as \$890,000.

Data shows that adults of all ages make up the largest percentage of visitors to The Cheech, followed by senior citizens, and college students, educators and children.

The Cheech evolved from a 2017 exhibition at the Riverside Art Museum entitled “Papel Chicano Dos,” which included artwork from Marin’s collection.” The Cheech opened in 2022 as a partnership between the City of Riverside, the Riverside Art Museum, and Cheech Marin.

The 61,420-square-foot facility showcases more than 500 works from prominent Chicano artists. Marin’s collection had previously traveled extensively, with The Cheech Marin Collection having been exhibited at more than 50 contemporary art institutions across the United States.

The Cheech also has significant room to grow its cultural and economic impact, the report found. Strategic planning is key to The Cheech continuing to evolve as a key economic driver and a hub for community engagement.

“The Cheech has substantial growth potential,” the study found. “As Riverside continues to grow and diversify, the museum can expand its role in both the city’s cultural and economic landscape. By maintaining innovation in programming, fostering local collaborations, and securing diverse funding sources, the museum has the opportunity to strengthen its position as a key cultural institution and a driver of community engagement and economic growth.”

“This is just the beginning,” said Patricia Reynolds, President of the Riverside Art Museum Board of Trustees. “We have a dynamic array of exhibitions and programs planned for the future. There is always something new to see at The Cheech. We invite you to follow along! Check us out, follow us on social media, and sign up for our newsletter (link on our website) to stay in the know. Be part of our journey!”