

September 6, 2017

Mayor Rusty Bailey
3900 Main St.
Riverside, CA 92501

Dear Mayor Bailey:

On behalf of the Society of California Archivists (SCA), I am writing to express our serious concerns regarding the uncertainty of the Riverside Municipal Archives. The Archives, housed in the Riverside Metropolitan Museum, was recently closed and the professional archivist position was eliminated. SCA is concerned that the layoff and closure will have a negative impact on the services that the Archives provides to the public.

As archivists we care deeply about the services, programs, and activities provided by all archives in California. Archives are a collection of historical records, containing primary source documents that have accumulated over the course of an individual or organization's lifetime, and are kept to show the function of that person or organization. Professional archivists help preserve these records and provide access and context to the records. The Municipal Archives is the primary source for historical documents about not only the city of Riverside, but its citizens.

Providing access should mean adequate public access hours and sufficient skilled archival staff to provide assistance to Riverside's citizens. Collections need to be professionally maintained and served to ensure that all of the documents and objects are safe and preserved for future generations. Professional archivists provide care and access to materials; they are the stewards of the collections.

There are a myriad of reasons why public access and proper care must be restored, ranging from the protection of legal due process to allowing citizen genealogists to uncover their family histories. SCA urges Riverside to provide adequate funding to allow public access hours weekly and restore previous staffing levels to insure the safety of the collections under municipal care. Once public trust is lost it is impossible for an institution to effectively solicit new donations from the community and continue building the archives.

SCA appreciates your public commitment to keep the archives accessible to the public, but without professional staff to process requests and steward the material, SCA is unsure of the future and safety of the Riverside Municipal Archives and its collections.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Uhlich". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

David Uhlich
President, Society of California Archivist