



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

---

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 25, 2015

### Contact:

Phil Pitchford  
Intergovernmental and Communications Officer  
951-826-5975  
[ppitchford@riversideca.gov](mailto:ppitchford@riversideca.gov)

## **SmartRiverside Adding “Coding” Classes, Moving Away From E-Waste Recycling**

*Shift to allow non-profit organization to focus on improving existing and new programs*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – SmartRiverside, the non-profit organization that aims to narrow the digital divide through its digital inclusion program, is discontinuing the e-waste collection portion of its fundraising effort. Funding will continue to be provided by grants, donations and SmartRiverside’s annual golf tournament.

The shift, which was approved recently by the organization’s Board of Directors, reflects market changes that make e-waste collection less attractive as a fundraiser for SmartRiverside. By focusing instead on more sustainable revenue sources, SmartRiverside aims to cut expenses and increase revenue.

“Due to e-waste commodity pricing fluctuation, an increase in e-waste collection competition and rising overhead costs, we have found that the e-waste collection is no longer a viable source of revenue for SmartRiverside,” said Executive Director Lea Deesing, who also is the City’s Chief Innovation Officer.

“We want to focus our attention on increasing the quantity, quality and type of computers we can give to low-income families and on expanding the digital inclusion program to include computer programming or ‘coding’ classes for kids.”

The organization will continue to offer free computer training and free computers to low-income families. The coding classes will be the focus of a new public-private-nonprofit committee.

“Coding classes represent a new frontier for SmartRiverside,” said Mayor Rusty Bailey, who also is Chairman of the SmartRiverside Board of Directors. “This innovative new approach holds great promise in terms of providing young people in Riverside with a career path and a set of skills that are in great demand in today’s high-tech economy.”

The coding program could eventually be expanded to include veterans, at-risk youth, seniors, girls, and other communities underserved in the computer programming field. The program will be well-

positioned to seek grants from various new funding sources, such as President Obama's new Tech Hire program.

SmartRiverside will continue to offer several other programs, including a tenant improvement grant program for high-tech startups, a Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) speaker outreach program to inspire kids to get into STEM fields, an Innovation Honoree program to acknowledge local high-tech leaders, an internship and mentoring program for at-risk youth and more.