



City of Arts & Innovation

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City of Riverside One of Few Nationwide Selected for Prestigious Harvard Civic Engagement Program

Bloomberg Foundation free program supports city's efforts to communicate fire risk

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City of Riverside is one of just a handful of cities worldwide selected to participate in the exclusive Leading Civic Engagement in Cities program at Harvard University John. F. Kennedy School of Government offered by the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative -- a rare opportunity that places Riverside among the nation's most forward-thinking and innovative local governments.

Senior Riverside officials joined the week-long executive education program in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to learn research-backed strategies for partnering with residents to solve pressing local challenges in new ways.

Through intensive classroom sessions, the program equips municipal teams with research-backed strategies they can quickly put to work in their city halls to engage residents as partners in solving pressing problems and delivering results -- increasing public engagement in policymaking and trust in local government. Riverside officials are already applying the coursework to bolster wildfire preparedness – improving approaches for effectively and efficiently reaching residents with vital information to protect property and neighborhoods while complying with state mandates.

“Being selected for this program is a tremendous honor and opportunity,” City Manager Mike Futrell said. “Learning new skills helps build the strong city staff teams needed to tackle the complex issues facing communities today. Our specific focus as a team is how to engage our community to prevent and, if necessary, to recover from wildfires, but the new skills we develop apply to a broad range of critical issues in Riverside.”

The Riverside team attending included City Manager Mike Futrell, Fire Chief Steve McKinster, Marketing and Communications Director Kaitlin Reiersen and Zoe Ridgway, Policy Advisor to Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson. The Mayor brought this opportunity to Riverside through her relationship with Bloomberg, which selected her nearly four years ago to participate with 37 other mayors from around

the world in the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative. The executive education program is fully funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, covering tuition, airfare, lodging, and meals.

Riverside joins a cohort of just 14 other cities from around the United States and the world, including Columbus, Ohio; New Orleans, Louisiana; Liverpool, United Kingdom; and uMngeni, South Africa, among others. The competitive selection process highlights Riverside's commitment to inclusive leadership, innovative problem-solving, and transparent governance.

"This isn't just theory -- it's a springboard for action," Futrell said. "And the work continues as the Harvard team will collaborate with ongoing coaching to ensure we get the most from the intensive in-person training provided. As a result, we are a stronger team with a shared language and new ideas for engaging residents in building a safer, more resilient Riverside."

For more information on the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, visit <https://www.cityleadership.harvard.edu>.