



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Jan. 29, 2026

Contact:

Phil Pitchford

Public Information Officer

951-826-5975

ppitchford@riversideca.gov

City of Riverside Partners With Education Institutions to Explore Job and Economic Growth Through the Learning Institute for Flight Technology (LIFT)

Memorandum of Understanding sets path for future cooperation

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City of Riverside is working with two local school districts and several local colleges to explore ways to create additional jobs and long-term growth in the aviation, aerospace, and related technology sectors through the Learning Institute for Flight Technology (LIFT).

“This will ensure Riverside remains proactive, not reactive, about aerospace and advanced manufacturing jobs,” said City Councilmember Steven Robillard, who proposed the idea. “This is an opportunity to explore partnerships and have a dialogue about what we can bring to our city.”

The cooperative effort includes the City, Riverside Unified School District, Alvord Unified School District, Riverside City College, California Baptist University and UC Riverside. It will allow the organizations to work together to evaluate how existing educational offerings, industry needs, and regional assets could be improved over time to generate more career awareness, improve skills development, and build a more skilled workforce.

“We are excited to be working with each other and with industry to keep talent in the Inland Empire,” said Eric Bishop, Interim President, Riverside City College.

The organizations recently memorialized in a memorandum of understanding the intention to combine their shared assets to examine the role of technology within aviation, aerospace, and related fields. The effort will create a shared awareness of emerging trends and potential applications, and how career readiness can be enhanced through focused education, training, and workforce development.

One option includes examining how Riverside Airport can be leveraged as part of this effort. The Airport is the busiest FAA Federal Contract Tower airport in California, ranking 116th nationwide in operations, including emergency services, air ambulance flights, and firefighting missions.

The Airport is part of Southern California's rich aviation legacy, providing training and general aviation opportunities for current and future aviators. The Airport already is home to flight schools and FAA STEM initiatives.

"We are laying the foundation tonight," Robillard said. "This positions Riverside to compete and keep our job pipelines local."

The effort to enhance the skills and educational opportunities of local students comes amid significant employment opportunities in several aviation fields. For example, the Federal Aviation Administration projects a need for 8,900 new air traffic controllers and a 10 to 20 percent shortage of aviation technicians and mechanics by 2028, and a shortage of 24,000 pilots by 2026.

"Providing opportunities like this for our students is really what makes a difference in our lives," said Krista Fairley, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services at Alvord Unified School District.