



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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City of Riverside Receives \$25 Million for Renovation of the César Chávez Community Center

Construction is expected to start late next year on substantial improvements to the center

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Major renovations to the César Chávez Community Center at Bobby Bonds Park are on the way following the City Council’s unanimous vote on Tuesday (4/4) to accept \$25 million in state funds.

The money was included in the state budget last year with strong support from former Assemblymember Jose Medina, Assemblymember Sabrina Cervantes, and the Riverside Arts Academy. The Council’s action Tuesday was to approve an agreement with the state that allows the money to come to the city for this purpose.

“This project will transform the center as a gathering place for our community, including students of the Riverside Arts Academy,” Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson said. “We greatly appreciate the work of our state representatives in bringing these funds home to Riverside.”

Following design work and competitive bidding, as well as permitting, construction is tentatively scheduled to begin in December 2024 and be completed in March 2026.

Work on the 95-year-old building could include replacement of the original heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system, electrical, plumbing, roofing, and other major building systems; hazardous materials abatement of lead and asbestos materials throughout the structure; updating the building and adjacent outbuildings up to current building codes; Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility improvements; and installation of broadband internet.

Also planned are reconfiguration of rooms and floor plans to support the Riverside Arts Academy, including the creation of performance spaces from existing rooms, acoustic enhancement of performance spaces for multiple instruments, and improvement of the existing the 1928 auditorium as a performance stage.

The Riverside Arts Academy is a not-for-profit organization that provides instruction in a curriculum that focuses on improving the quality of life of students through dance, music, and visual arts for youth ages 3-17. Classes include Ballet Folklorico, Hip Hop/Jazz, Keyboard, Guitar, Violin, Cello, and Art.

“The Cesar Chavez Community Center is in the heart of the Eastside and is a critical hub for our community,” said Mayor Pro Tem Clarissa Cervantes, who represents the area. “I look forward to our City putting these State funds to good use in creating a state-of-the-art facility for our youth, parents, and all residents. This funding is a dream come true.”

The César Chávez Community Center was built as University Heights Junior High School in 1928. The school closed in 1972, and the City purchased the building for a park facility in 1976. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.