City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Jan. 28, 2026

Contact:
Phil Pitchford
Public Information Officer
951-826-5975
ppitchford@riversideca.gov

City of Riverside is "Leveling Up," Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson Proclaims in 2026 State of the City Address

Mayor describes five areas in which Riverside is thriving

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson documented five key areas in which Riverside is "Leveling Up" during her 2026 State of the City address tonight (1/28), describing the city as "strong, resilient and rising," with its best days still ahead.

Proclaiming that "every metric is going in the right direction," Lock Dawson told attendees at the Riverside Convention Center that crime is down, revenues are up, unemployment is down, jobs are up, existing businesses are expanding and new businesses are opening.

"Riverside is a city that achieves and strives for more," Lock Dawson said. "It is a city that believes progress is a responsibility

Lock Dawson said Riverside has successfully focused on improving key quality of life indicators, including safety and stability; economic opportunities; health and the environment; identity; and by creating a city that "works for businesses today, residents right now, and generations to come."

The mayor pointed out that overall crime has dropped 35 percent during the past two years. She cited smarter policing, strong partnerships and strategic investments, including 88 new police officers, allowing RPD to reach full staffing for the first time in 25 years.

"I am proud to report that Riverside is an incredibly safe city and becoming safer every day," she said.

Riverside's economy isn't just growing; it is transforming. About 96 percent of office space in Riverside is occupied, giving the city one of the lowest vacancy rates in the country.

"Companies are not just looking at Riverside," Lock Dawson said. "They're choosing us."

Nestled in a region that enjoys the fourth fastest-growing economy in the country, Riverside has attracted $4.3 billion in new construction in 2025 and created 18,000 new jobs. Riverside Public

Utilities (RPU) offers some of the lowest electricity and water rates in the state. Six international companies have located here in the past two years, growing the city's innovation economy.

"When innovation clusters, jobs follow," Lock Dawson said. "And leveling up our economy means making City Hall move at the speed of business."

A new self-certification pilot program will help businesses get building permits faster. New regulations will make it easier for entrepreneurs to turn underutilized spaces into new businesses. And a new app is encouraging more people to shop locally.

Riverside is improving the local environment and closing gaps in healthcare. The UC Riverside School of Medicine graduated its largest class of doctors and is building a new teaching hospital. California Baptist University has doubled its physician assistant cohort. La Sierra University offers an online MBA in Health Care Management. A nearly $1 billion expansion of Riverside Community Hospital is underway, and an expansion of Kaiser Permanente hospital in La Sierra is expected to open in 2027.

Riverside is one of the top 11 cities nationally for installed solar capacity per capita; has launched the world's only Clean Air Carshare Program with 12 hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles; and broke ground at the Northside Agriculture Innovation Center.

"But we must do more," Lock Dawson said. -- by 2027, 70 percent of Riverside's energy will come from renewable sources, it's not just good for the planet but good for business"

Riverside also is leveling up the city's identity, both with residents and visitors.

"People feel connected here," Lock Dawson said. "They love where they live. And they're proud to call Riverside home.

The city's Arts and Culture District has been designated as a California Cultural District by the California Arts Council, which will help Riverside tell its story even more effectively in the future. The city's *Visit Riverside* initiative has reached 20 million people. A new initiative, Preserving Riverside's Treasures, will improve many of the city's 153 landmarks.

"Through this initiative, we're committing to protecting and celebrating these places as living parts of Riverside's future," Lock Dawson said.

Neighborhood improvements are changing the face of Riverside, where community centers served more than 1.5 million people last year. Parks and playgrounds were upgraded, with more improvements on the way at Orange Terrace Community Center, Hole Lake and Fairmount Park. In the Eastside neighborhood, $300 million in state investment will create a new Jesus Duran Library, renovate the Cesar Chavez Community Center, and build the new Dell Roberts Bordwell Park Gym.

Riverside's senior centers now serve more than 75,000 seniors and deliver over 31,000 meals annually. The mayor's new Senior Forum connected seniors to resources and provided a place for seniors to make their voices heard.

Riverside reached functional zero for youth homelessness, ensuring young people ages 18 to 24 can access housing, services, and support. Riverside has 6,000 units of housing in the pipeline for seniors, students, and families.

"This is Riverside's moment," Lock Dawson said. "This is Riverside's future. This is Riverside — leveling up."

-30-