



City of Arts & Innovation

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Riverside Kicks Off Fundraising Campaign to Bolster Harada House

Money will buy the Robinson house next to historic landmark for museum and interpretative center

RIVERSIDE, Calif. –The Riverside Metropolitan Museum has raised more than \$60,000 to buy a home next to the Harada House needed for the development of a museum/interpretative center that will explain how the National Historic Landmark played a key role in the civil rights struggle in California.

But the Museum must raise another \$190,000 by Jan. 31 to acquire the property known as the Robinson house or it could lose out on the opportunity to obtain as much as \$10 million from a private donor to complete the project, according to Sarah Mundy, Museum and Cultural Affairs Director.

The Robinson house is a key to unlocking the potential of the Harada House as a cultural and historical destination in Riverside, but could be lost if the Museum is unable to raise the \$250,000 in time.

“We truly are at a crossroads with the Harada House,” Mundy said. “If we can raise another \$190,000 in the next four months, we will position ourselves to be eligible for much more money that would allow us to give the Harada House the preservation treatment it deserves.”

The Harada family bought the home at 3356 Lemon Street in 1915 and placed title in the name of their American-born children due to the California Alien Land Law. The law had been enacted two years earlier to prevent people who were not eligible to be citizens from owning property in California.

The law affected Japanese immigrants most acutely, since they were not able to apply for citizenship. A court case that arose from the Haradas’ actions led to a legal decision that allowed their American-born children to own property under the 14th Amendment. The law eventually was overturned in 1952.

A member of the Robinson family, Cynthia Robinson, initially worked with neighbors in an effort to buy out the Haradas and was a member of the committee that took the Haradas to court. She later changed her position, however, and became a friend of the Harada family, which operated a restaurant in downtown Riverside and was very involved in the local community.

The Robinson house is the key to creating a destination on the site for historians and tourists alike. The Harada House would be a museum and the Robinson house would serve as an interpretative center that tells the story of the Harada family and its place in California and American history.

The Robinson house also would solve one of the persistent problems – parking in a residential neighborhood -- that has kept the Harada House project from moving forward.

“I’m committed to helping bring to life this site that played such a crucial role in determining what it means to be an American,” Riverside Mayor Rusty Bailey said.

The Robinson house became available earlier this summer. The owner donated it to California State University, Long Beach to benefit a Japanese garden there. But, after hearing about the Harada House project and the role of the Robinson house in that story, the donor and CSULB’s Foundation agreed to have an extended escrow to give the Riverside museum time to raise money.

The Harada House was given to the City of Riverside in 2005, but was damaged by heavy rains the following year. A federal grant helped pay for a new roof and stabilize the structure, but much more remains to be done before the Harada House can welcome visitors.

To learn how you can help this important fundraising effort, please call the Harada House Fundraising line at (951) 231-5345.

More information on the Harada House can be found on the website of the Riverside Metropolitan Museum -- <http://riversideca.gov/museum/haradahouse>

The Harada House Virtual Tour of items on display at the museum can be found here -- <http://riversideca.gov/museum/tour/room2.asp>