



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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## **Riverside City Council Takes Major Step Forward on Cheech Marin Center**

*Agreement with noted entertainer/art collector and Riverside Art Museum Unanimously Approved*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The proposed Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture and Industry in downtown Riverside took a major step forward Tuesday (5/16) evening when the Riverside City Council unanimously approved a memorandum of understanding to negotiate exact terms between the City, the noted entertainer/art collector and the Riverside Art Museum (RAM).

The memorandum of understanding (MOU) gives all parties through the end of February, 2018 to determine precise roles and responsibilities for each entity in making the Cheech Marin Center – which Marin has affectionately dubbed “The Cheech” – a reality. It also sets in motion the need to raise \$3 million of the estimated \$7 million cost for the center.

Marin has shared portions of his collection for public display at museums around the U.S. to promote and validate Chicano artists and culture. He is seeking a permanent home where his collection can be housed, curated, displayed, and studied in a public venue in a city and region with a large Spanish-speaking heritage community.

“We are recognizing, acknowledging and celebrating a community, not just here in Riverside, but across this country, that has not had that before,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said just prior to the unanimous vote. “It’s an incredible moment, and we should be very proud.”

Marin was unable to attend because he is shooting a movie in Atlanta, but he called in by phone and was patched into the speaker system in the Council chambers.

“Thank you very much for passing this,” Marin said. “I am thankful that you have a lot of faith in what we can accomplish here. This means the world to me. This is a really important project.”

Marin is seeking a permanent home for more than 700 works of Chicano art, including paintings, sculptures, and photography, making up the most renowned collection in the United States. The proposed Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture, and Industry would be located immediately

adjacent to the historic Mission Inn Hotel & Spa in a building that currently houses Riverside's Main Library. The library is moving to a new location a few blocks away.

The MOU will remain in place until the end of February, unless extended for an additional 90 days by agreement of all parties. The outcome of the MOU process would dictate the timeline for the Cheech Marin Center.

"There is much work remaining, and a significant effort ahead to raise the first \$3 million of public dollars, but we are very excited to be moving forward with this project," Mayor Pro Tem Mike Gardner said. "The Cheech Marin Center will be an incredible addition to our historic downtown and the cultural amenities available to residents and tourists alike."

The agreement between Marin and RAM would outline the legal means by which Marin's collection could be donated/lent to RAM for the creation of the Cheech Marin Center and the terms and expectations for significant portions of the collection to be displayed at museums worldwide.

The agreement between the City and RAM would establish a management contract through which RAM would provide all staffing, management, marketing, and curatorial services for the Cheech Marin Center. The cost of this agreement could be deferred by a portion of a per-admission facility fee.

The plan also would include adequate space to protect and store Marin's collection, RAM's collection, and other collections as necessary. The Cheech Marin Center would be designed as a home of serious academic inquiry and include space for lectures, film and video screening, classrooms and other spaces, as well as a café and a museum store.

The proposed museum would build on momentum already established between Marin and RAM via the collaboration on *Papel Chicanos Dos: Works on Paper / From the Collection of Cheech Marin*, which opened to record attendance numbers in February, along with *Trabajmos/We Work: In the Fields of the North / Photographs by David Bacon*.

*Papel Chicano Dos: Works on Paper / From the Collection of Cheech Marin*, supported by Altura Credit Union and the City of Riverside, presented 65 artworks by 24 established and early-career artists whose work demonstrates a myriad of techniques from watercolor and aquatint to pastel and mixed media.

The opening reception attracted 1,476 attendees. Admission sales for the day broke records, and admission revenue for the first month of the exhibit was triple the normal amounts.

Due to the enthusiastic and large crowd at the opening reception on February 2 and RAM's longstanding history of collecting and exhibiting works on paper, Marin generously donated the Chicano Collection, a portfolio of 26 archival-quality prints, which were presented to RAM during the talk and book signing for Marin's memoir, *Cheech Is Not My Real Name: ...But Don't Call Me Chong*, on March 29.

Video of the City Council meeting in where the agreement was approved can be found at the 4:27 mark of this video: [http://riversideca.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=2&clip\\_id=2796](http://riversideca.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=2796)

A staff report that includes details of the MOU can be found here:

<https://riversideca.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3038804&GUID=3A2B1A44-88DF-4F50-B8F3-F91618EA4624&Options=&Search>

For photos of the proposed Cheech Marin Center and of Marin and City officials at a recent press conference, go here: <https://filecloud.riversideca.gov/url/bty2ywpm3dgy>

Video of that press conference, starting at roughly the 15:00 mark, can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPACRlOrvrl>

Mayor's Bailey's interview with Cheech Marin on "Riverside Monthly" can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wva9-9WMTGc>