



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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Al Zelinka Named City Manager in Riverside

Former Assistant City Manager also previously served City as Community Development Director

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City of Riverside has named Al Zelinka as its next City Manager, citing his devotion to public service and more than 25 years working collaboratively to build community.

Zelinka has worked for the City for six years, the past three as Assistant City Manager. He most recently oversaw the Community and Economic Development Department; Parks, Recreation and Community Services; the Public Works Department; and the Office of Communications, which includes the City's public information and marketing functions. For nearly three years, he also oversaw the Innovation and Technology Department. He previously was Community Development Director.

“Al Zelinka is an excellent choice to lead our City’s 2,600 employees at a unique time in Riverside’s history,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “We must balance our excitement over our recent economic development successes with a prudent level of concern over upcoming challenges, including the City’s unfunded pension obligations. Al Zelinka will work with all segments of the community to find solutions. His relationships with our business leaders are unmatched.”

Zelinka will take over the job from Interim City Manager Lee C. McDougal, who has served since former City Manager John Russo was fired April 17.

“I am humbled that the City’s elected leadership has entrusted me with such a critical job and to endeavor on their behalf to realize Riverside’s promise and potential,” Zelinka said. “I look forward to working in partnership with the City’s elected leadership, and in cooperation with its strong business community and its active and diverse neighborhood groups, toward consensus and constructive solutions on the major issues facing Riverside.”

With a statewide reputation for his commitment to urban planning, Zelinka has spent more than 25 years with the same career objective: to “make a difference” in the communities in which he serves. In both the private and public sectors, Zelinka has worked in more than 28 states, directing more than 150 projects and playing an active role in another 100.

Before coming to Riverside, he was Community Development Director, and Planning Manager, for the City of Fullerton for four years. He previously spent 11 years as Principal/Vice President of RBF Consulting's Urban Design Studio (now Michael Baker International) in Irvine. Previous experiences included stints as an urban planner at The Planning Center (now PlaceWorks) in Newport Beach; a planner at the City of Phoenix; and a VISTA program coordinator for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in Fairbanks, Alaska.

"Al Zelinka brings an impressive combination of government and private sector experience to his new post," Mayor Pro Tem Chris MacArthur said. "He has demonstrated during his time in Riverside that he understands how the private sector works and how government can be a partner in creating economic opportunity."

Zelinka's community involvement includes: Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Inland Empire — Riverside Area Board (Member & Alumni Big Brother); California Baptist University Dr. Robert K. Jabs School of Business Dean's Leadership Circle (Incoming Member); Olive Crest — Inland & Desert Communities Advisory Council (Member); and the UC Riverside School of Business Dean's Advisory Council (Member).

Zelinka earned a Bachelor of Science in Public Planning from Northern Arizona University and a Master of Regional Planning from Cornell University. He is an enthusiastic and well-respected participant in professional organizations like the American Planning Association, National Main Street Center, and Lambda Alpha International. He is a Past President of the California Planning Roundtable, a 35-year organization dedicated to advancing the practice and profession of planning and providing leadership for a better California.

The co-author of two books, *SafeScape* and *Placemaking on a Budget*, Zelinka also has written more than 15 articles for professional journals; delivered more than 150 conference presentations, and taught or lectured at eight universities. He created and endowed the first scholarship for planning students at his alma mater, Northern Arizona University. He has been a "Big Brother" in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program and remains in contact with his "Little Brother," a good friend whom he started mentoring in 1987.

The City Council voted in closed session today (5/22) to appoint Zelinka, subject to the approval of an employment contract. The Council will hold a special meeting at 1 p.m. Tuesday, May 29, to discuss and vote on the contract.