



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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City of Riverside Celebrates Economic Development Momentum with State Awards, National Outreach Successes, and New Business Website Launch, RiversideBusiness.org

City lauded for efforts on economic development, strategic partnerships and local economy

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City of Riverside’s Community and Economic Development Department is celebrating a major milestone after earning two prestigious Awards of Merit at the 2026 California Association for Local Economic Development (CALED) Annual Conference. The awards recognize the City’s innovative economic development programs, strategic partnerships, and commitment to building a stronger local economy.

The recognition caps off an especially successful conference season for the City’s Economic Development team, which also recently hosted a SelectUSA SpinOff event in Riverside, entered into a MOU with the Lahti Region of Finland for economic development collaboration, participated as California delegates in the national SelectUSA Investment Summit, and promoted Riverside’s value proposition in over 20 meetings with leading retailers and developers at the International Conference of Shopping Centers in Las Vegas. These efforts are all part of Riverside’s ongoing strategy to attract investment, support local businesses, and strengthen the regional economy through collaboration and relationship-building.

CALED President and CEO Gurbax Sahota visited Riverside on Thursday (5/21) to personally present the awards during the City Council’s Economic Development Committee meeting.

“CALED has recognized excellence in economic development across California for more than 40 years, and Riverside continues to stand out as a model for innovation, partnership, and execution,” said Sahota. “The City’s Economic Development team has built a culture centered on collaboration, creativity, and results. From transformative projects like the Farm House Collective to the ambitious vision behind *Riverside Realized*, this team is demonstrating how strategic partnerships and strong leadership can create lasting economic opportunity for an entire community.”

The CALED Awards of Merit honor impactful economic development projects and partnerships throughout California that demonstrate innovation, measurable outcomes, and community benefit. Riverside was recognized in the categories of Collaboration in Real Estate & Finance and Programs & Promotions.

Farm House Collective Project Recognized for Real Estate & Finance Collaboration

The Award of Merit for Collaborations in Real Estate & Finance recognized the public-private-partnership that spurred the transformation of the former Farmhouse Motel into the Farm House Collective, a revitalized destination featuring local eateries, artisan vendors, and outdoor gathering spaces near downtown Riverside.

Originally built in 1953, the property had been closed for years before being reimagined through a partnership between the City and Stronghold Engineering. The project preserved the site's historic character while creating a pedestrian-oriented marketplace that supports local entrepreneurship and strengthens downtown activity.

The City supported the project by selling the former Successor Agency site, coordinating across departments to streamline permitting and historic preservation requirements, helping move the development forward efficiently. The completed site now serves as a hub for small businesses, dining, and community gathering, contributing to ongoing revitalization efforts.

***Riverside Realized* Honored for Programs and Promotions**

Riverside Realized, the City's Strategic Plan Implementation tool, received the Award of Merit in the Programs and Promotions category. As the first initiative of its kind for the City of Riverside, *Riverside Realized* serves as the City's economic development implementation plan, guiding investment and growth priorities through a coordinated and transparent strategy.

The initiative combines a print publication with a digital platform showcasing Riverside's economic strengths, business climate, and development goals. It also outlines measurable benchmarks to track progress and support transparency.

The plan includes more than 90 strategic actions across nine strategic focus areas designed to strengthen Riverside's economy, support business growth, attract investment, and improve quality of life for residents. To date, the Economic Development team has completed more than 75 percent of the identified actions, demonstrating the City's commitment to turning vision into action and maintaining momentum on long-term economic priorities.

Interim Community & Economic Development Director Miranda Evans said the awards reflect the dedication and teamwork behind Riverside's economic development efforts.

"These awards are a reflection of the incredible collaboration happening across our Economic Development team, our City departments, and our community partners," Evans said. "Over the past year, our team has worked tirelessly through a very active conference and outreach season to tell Riverside's story, build new relationships, and create opportunities that strengthen our local economy. Receiving this recognition from CALED and hosting the CALED President in Riverside is an exciting milestone that reinforces the momentum we are building together."

Together, the award-winning initiatives and the City's recent regional and national engagement efforts underscore Riverside's continued focus on business attraction, job creation, entrepreneurship, and strategic investment that supports long-term economic vitality.

Also announced at the City Council's Economic Development Committee meeting on 5/21, the City of Riverside has officially launched a new economic development website and brand designed to accelerate business growth, attract investment, and strengthen support for the local business community. Developed by Riverside-based company Compelle under the leadership of CEO Michael Berger, the new platform, www.riversidebusiness.org, is a digital resource that signals a new era of economic development excellence for the City of Riverside. The launch reflects the City's commitment to innovation, collaboration, and creating a business-friendly environment that positions Riverside for long-term economic success and opportunity.

"The launch of RiversideBusiness.org marks a major step forward in how we support, attract, and grow business in the City of Riverside," Evans said. "This new platform and brand reflect our commitment to economic development excellence, creating a modern, business-focused resource that showcases Riverside's strengths, streamlines access to opportunities, and reinforces that Riverside is open for business and ready for the future."

More information about CALED and the Awards of Merit is available at CALED.org.