



City of Arts & Innovation

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Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson Declares Riverside in MOTION

Mayor reflects on Mission, Opportunities, Talent, Inclusivity, Optimism, Now

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Riverside is in MOTION, capitalizing on its strengths and poised for additional economic growth, Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson said Thursday in the annual State of the City address.

Lock Dawson focused her comments on how Riverside is building on attributes incorporated in that MOTION acronym -- Mission, Opportunities, Talent, Inclusivity, Optimism, Now. The address is presented by the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce in partnership with the City of Riverside.

Lock Dawson noted that, as the 12th largest city in California, Riverside is larger than 99 percent of all cities in the country. In almost half of the states in the country, it would be the largest city in the state.

“No longer are we a small town, waiting for our turn or recognition. Riverside has arrived and we’re in motion,” Lock Dawson said. “We are moving forward, leading the way locally, regionally, and nationally on development, technology, arts, parks, transportation, public safety. You name it, Riverside is innovating and setting the bar.”

Confronting head-on the challenge of homelessness, Lock Dawson said Riverside is tackling what is a nationwide crisis with a three-pronged strategy: prevention, intervention, and enforcement. While homelessness rose 12 percent across the nation in 2023, it rose just six percent in California, but there still is work to do, she said.

Riverside has been a leader in advocating for updates to the state’s outdated mental health laws, Lock Dawson said. Those advocacy efforts in Sacramento helped Riverside County become one of the first counties in the state to start a CARE Court program.

“These are the first meaningful changes to our mental health laws in over 50 years, and Riverside has led the way,” Lock Dawson said.

She also noted that the City worked with the Sheriff’s Department and local non-profit organization Victory Outreach to reduce the number of people falling into homelessness when leaving the jails

through a program called Project Connect, which links people exiting the jails with services. The program recently was recognized with the 2023 Safety and Security Award from the Riverside Downtown Partnership.

The ongoing Mayor's Challenge to End Youth Homelessness partnered with the County of Riverside to cut the incidence of youth homeless by 27 percent while the rest of the state's homeless youth population grew.

Working with state and federal representatives, Riverside successfully advocated in bringing resources to the city. Lock Dawson said the city has secured more than \$300 million during her tenure as mayor by working collaboratively with the City Council, City leadership and regional, state, and federal partners.

For example, Riverside attracted 60 percent more grant funding in 2023, with more than 50 grants, including \$35 million for housing and homelessness efforts; \$14.6 million for libraries; \$41.2 million for parks; and \$105 million for public works and infrastructure.

"Every day – every, every day -- I fight to make sure Riverside has a seat at the table, that we are getting noticed, and that we are getting our fair share of funding," Lock Dawson said. "And that has not always been the case."

Two local strengths – the Festival of Lights and the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art and Culture – are getting even stronger, Lock Dawson said. The Cheech exceeded expectations with more than 110,000 visitors in the first year generating more than \$200,000 in revenue back to the city. The Festival of Lights drew 65,000 people to the annual switch-on ceremony and 700,000 people overall, creating an economic impact of \$154 million.

"We often talk about mission statements. Every good organization has one," Lock Dawson said. "But here in Riverside, we don't just have a mission statement -- we live our mission every day, to make Riversiders' lives better."