

2019 GOVERNOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

Doors Open Riverside



Doors Open events first took place in France in 1984, and spread across Europe, North America, and Australia. These events provide free access to architecturally and historically significant sites that are often closed to the public. By "opening the doors" to these architectural gems, organizers increase awareness of historic architecture and a community's collective heritage. Doors Open Riverside also expands the audience for these buildings to people outside of the community, giving them a first-hand experience of these significant structures and demonstrating the history of Riverside.

The first Doors Open Riverside took place during California Preservation Month on May 12, 2016 with approximately 1000 attendees from across the region. Attendees toured 16 buildings in the City's historic downtown area, learning about each building's history and architecture. Since the inaugural event in 2016, Doors Open Riverside has become an annual event on the second Tuesday in May. The third Annual Doors Open Riverside, in 2018, was the largest event to date with approximately 1,500 people touring 27 buildings.

Doors Open Riverside is an intergenerational, free, public event, organized by a collaborative partnership between the City of Riverside, Riverside Downtown Partnership, and the Mission Inn Foundation. Members of the partnership solicit owners of buildings to participate and provide access to their properties. Docents

for the program are recruited from the Mission Inn Museum. The docents, in turn, receive support from a crew of volunteers drawn from local historic organizations, preservation groups, churches, college and high school students, and the general public.

Through diligent research, the volunteers learn about the architecture, history, and people associated with each building, expanding their own knowledge of the City, and sharing that knowledge with tour attendees. Volunteers often uncover new information about a building, which they share with the current owners thereby expanding the knowledge of the property's history. The volunteers' enthusiasm about the Doors Open event has resulted in a steady rise in volunteers from year to year. The Doors Open Riverside website provides information about the event and about each property on the tour. A coloring book featuring each of the participating buildings is handed out free to children on the day of the event.

As Doors Open Riverside has grown over its first three years, it has expanded beyond the downtown core to neighborhoods of the City whose history has often gone unrecognized or underrepresented. The expansion has further helped to showcase the history of Riverside's development, while highlighting the successful restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of many of the City's historic resources. Doors Open Riverside provides a yearly opportunity to inspire current and future generations of citizens to celebrate and preserve the unique heritage of their City.