

CITY LIFE & FINE LIVING

# RIVERSIDE

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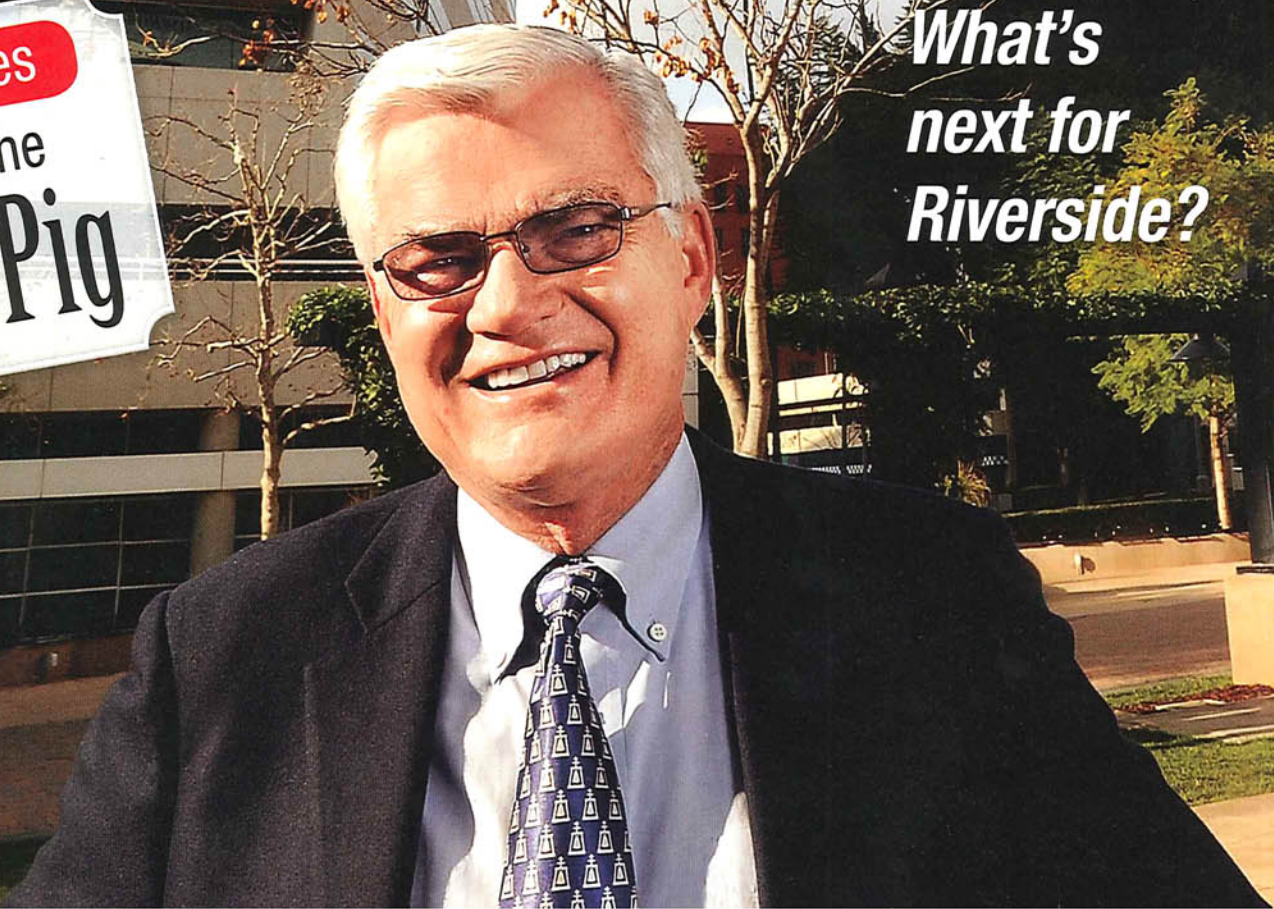
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# 2012 Transition

*What's  
next for  
Riverside?*

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COVER STORY

# OUTLOOK 2012

*Opportunities, challenges  
in the year ahead*





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S RIVERSIDE moves deeper into its post-Renaissance

era, the city remains a dynamic place. Cranes and bulldozers, which worked the construction and redevelopment projects that remade major parts of Riverside, didn't all go away when the five-year initiative wrapped up last year. Many moved on to build gleaming new structures — the Citrus Tower office building and Hyatt Place hotel among them.

While those projects are changing the face of downtown, other issues will have even broader impact. It is an election year, and by the end of it Riverside will have its first new mayor since 1994. Many residents also will have new City Council representatives, with ward boundaries being redrawn to account for population shifts and growth.

And that's not all. Jesse B. Gill and Jerry Rice recently talked with five local power players to get their perspectives on what's in store for Riverside during the next 12 months.

PHOTO BY GABRIEL LUIS ACOSTA

## Duane Roberts

Owner, The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa

Duane Roberts is celebrating his 20th year as owner of Riverside's iconic Mission Inn Hotel & Spa. Beyond that milestone, he believes there's not much to celebrate.

Times remain tough for the hospitality industry. The average disposable income for most households is still trending down, meaning families aren't taking vacations like they once did, and if they are, they'll find ways to avoid staying at historic hotels like his.

"It's been a very difficult environment out there when you have this amount of unemployment," Roberts said. "It's still a struggle out there."

Now a new competitor is preparing to siphon off at least a portion of what business Roberts is fighting to retain. The Hyatt Place



PHOTO BY GABRIEL LUIS ACOSTA

in downtown Riverside is set to open in April, and Roberts is concerned that the new hotel will cut into a customer stream that currently flows to the Mission Inn and Riverside Marriott.

"Then you have the

closure of the convention center," he said. "It couldn't come at a worse time."

The 40-year-old Riverside Convention Center will close in June for a \$36 million expansion and renovation. Until the project is finished in 2013, it will mean fewer

customers looking for rooms at Riverside hotels. And if they have to hold their conventions somewhere else, Roberts fears they may never come back.

"It's a battle," he said. "We're basically fighting for survival, and a lot of other hotels have gone under. It's a very difficult time."

Despite having misgivings about 2012's business outlook, he's excited about the development that is transforming downtown Riverside.

And the Mission Inn's famous Festival of Lights always ends the year on a strong note. There are surprises in store for this year's edition, his 20th as owner.

"We have some special events coming up with some different things," he said. "Right now we're in the planning stage."

— Jesse B. Gill



## Hardy L. Brown

Co-publisher,  
The Black Voice News

What started in 1972 as a publication serving college students, The Black Voice News celebrates an important anniversary this year.

Its success comes as a result of reporting on issues that affect a diverse community, says Hardy L. Brown, co-publisher. A special look back is in the works.

"We hope to highlight some of the milestones of the

past 40 years while recognizing current leaders from all walks of life in the Riverside community," he wrote in an email.

The big local issue of the year is the coming change in the city's leadership. Mayor Ron Loveridge, who has served in that position since 1994, is not running for re-election. Voters will likely pick from several candidates on the June 5 ballot.

"No one knows who will replace him, but that will set into motion a new direction

in policy," Brown said. "It will not be noticed at first, but will gradually change."

Another issue facing the city, he added, is the loss of redevelopment funds, "unless the state comes up with a replacement solution."

Brown offered praise for the city's outgoing leader.

"Mayor Loveridge has been good for race relations by including people in the decision-making on critical issues," he said.

— Jerry Rice