



PLANNING COMMISSION

AGENDA REPORT

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING DIVISION**
DATE: January 6, 2022

SUBJECT: **LIVABLE CORRIDORS FORM-BASED CODE, PLN12-248:** Study Session to provide comments on the draft Zoning Text and Zoning Map Amendments implementing the Richmond Livable Corridors Form-Based Code (FBC), including Architectural Standards. The draft Zoning Text Amendments and Zoning Map Amendments, including Architectural Standards are available for review at <http://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/2965/RLC-FBC>

PREPARED BY: Roberta Feliciano, Senior Planner

LOCATION: Various (see Map, Attachment 1)

ZONING: Various (see Map, Attachment 2)

GENERAL PLAN: Various (see Map, Attachment 3)

APPLICANT: City of Richmond

CEQA: This is a study session and CEQA determination is not required at this time.

PROPOSAL:

As part of the Zoning Update, completed in 2016, the City reserved Series 400 in Article XV, Zoning & Subdivisions of the Richmond Municipal Code to establish new Form-Based Zoning Districts.

The project proposes amendments to the Richmond Municipal Code that would add a new Chapter 15.04.400 Form-Based Code to establish new transect zones that comply with the land use classifications established in the General Plan 2030, amend the Zoning Map to rezone certain properties using the form-based code transect zones, and establish new standards and regulations for these transect zones.

“The transect is an organizing principle often used in form-based coding that focuses first on the intended character and type of place and second on the mix of uses within the area. This differs from the framework found in conventional or Euclidean zoning in which use, rather than form, is the primary focus.” (Form-Based Code Institute). The FBC also includes adoption of objective

architectural standards to guide the development and review of projects located in these transect zones.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. Hold a public hearing; and
2. Provide comments and feedback on the draft Zoning Text Amendments, Zoning Map and Architectural Standards implementing the Livable Corridors Form-Based Code.

BACKGROUND:

In 2020, the City received an SB 2 Planning Grant from the California Department of Housing and Community Development to update and integrate the Form-Based Code into the Zoning Ordinance. The grant program provides funding and technical assistance to all local governments in California to help cities and counties prepare, adopt, and implement plans and process improvements that streamline housing approvals and accelerate housing production consistent with the State Planning Priorities. This work builds upon the draft Form-Based Code (“FBC”) that was developed in 2015 with funding from a Sustainable Communities Planning Grant from the California Strategic Growth Council. The work was delayed at the time to integrate the form-based code into the Zoning Ordinance.

The proposed FBC, once adopted, would replace the existing zoning and associated development standards to support a more walkable urban environment and create ‘complete neighborhoods’ as envisioned by the General Plan 2030. The City selected to do a FBC because it reinforces walkable, sustainable, mixed-use environments and development, and builds upon the character of a place. As noted by the Form-Based Codes Institute, “form-based codes foster predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. They are regulations, not mere guidelines, adopted into city or county law. Form-based codes offer a powerful alternative to conventional zoning.”

An extensive outreach process was undertaken to gather community input in the development of the 2015 FBC as summarized in the Richmond Livable Corridors Charrette Summary Report (2012). As part of the update to the FBC, the City hosted a virtual community meeting on November 4, 2020 to gather input and address questions. On June 24, 2021, planning staff and City’s consultant (Opticos Design, Inc.) presented the FBC to the Richmond Heights Neighborhood Council. Comments during the meeting were positive and residents were excited to learn about the types of development envisioned along San Pablo Avenue.

DISCUSSION:

As noted in the introduction of the FBC, “the [FBC] reflects the community vision for implementing the intent of the General Plan to create walkable mixed-use neighborhoods. [The] Form-Based Code standards are intended to ensure that proposed development is compatible with existing and future development on neighboring properties, and produces an environment of desirable character, consistent with the General Plan. The FBC is based on an initial documentation and analysis of the existing conditions at the macro (citywide) and micro (street and block) scales. The results of this analysis helped to classify the different types of places in Richmond and calibrate their subsequent standards. [The] Form-Based Code is also based on the input received by the community throughout the process to ensure that the standards in [the] Code reflect the community’s vision for the future

of their community as documented in the General Plan (2012), 23rd Street Corridor Charrette Summary Report (2009), and Richmond Livable Corridors Charrette Summary Report (2012).

Chapter 15.04.400 Form-Based Code would be a new chapter under Article XV, Zoning and Subdivisions, that would supersede the existing zoning regulation for the sites proposed to be rezoned using the new transect zones, except where the Zoning Ordinance is specifically referenced.

Chapter 15.04.400 Form-Based Code is divided into the following components:

1. The Preamble Article provides the overall intent of this Form-Based Code as it is applied within the City and provides an overview of the standards contained within.
2. The Transect Zones Article provides regulatory standards governing building form and land use within the transect zones. The standards in this Article are a reflection of the community's vision for implementing the intent of the General Plan to preserve natural areas, to create walkable mixed-use neighborhoods, and reinforce downtown Richmond. They are intended to ensure that proposed development is compatible with existing and future development on neighboring properties and produces an environment of desirable character.
3. The Building Types Article sets forth the standards applicable to the development of each building type. These standards supplement the standards for each zone that the building types are allowed within. These standards are intended to ensure development that reinforces walkability, relationships within the built environment, and the highly-valued existing character and scale of Richmond's historic neighborhoods and downtown. Additionally, these standards are intended to allow creation of new developments that create new walkable neighborhoods.
4. The Frontage Types Article sets forth the standards applicable to the development of private frontages. Private frontages are the components of a building that provide an important transition and interface between the public realm (street and sidewalk) and the private realm (yard or building). These standards supplement the standards for each zone that the frontage types are allowed within. For each frontage type, a description, a statement of the type's intent, and design standards are provided. These standards are intended to ensure development that reinforces the highly-valued existing character and scale of Richmond's neighborhoods and downtown.
5. The Architectural Standards Article sets forth objective standards that support the zone standards to further refine the intended building form and physical character.
6. The General to Large Sites Article sets forth standards that generate a walkable environment through the establishment of new blocks and thoroughfares and that provide a set of civic space types and their associated standards to use within the transect zones.

Architectural Standards

The Architectural Standards are a critical component of the Form-Based Code. It allows the City to develop objective design standards that all new development is required to meet.

The City's subjective design criteria and development regulations cannot be enforced for some housing projects, given changes in State law (SB35, SB330).

The Architectural Standards proposes to transform the previous Architectural Guidelines into objective standards and streamline review. The previous Architectural Standards were developed with input from a DRB subcommittee and ultimately recommended for approval by the Design Review Board in March 2015.

The Architectural Standards provide an overview of some of the architectural styles that are endemic to the City of Richmond, the Bay Area, and the Northern California region. Each style is described, listing some of its typical characteristics and providing photographic examples for each. These descriptions represent a broad sampling of each architectural style and are not intended to be inclusive.

Styles included in the Architectural Guidelines are:

- Main Street
- Victorian
- Spanish Revival
- Art Deco/Art Moderne/Mid-Century Modern
- Industrial
- California Contemporary

The Architectural Guidelines identify the key characteristics of the above architectural styles to enable building design that is rooted in the unique aspects of Richmond. They also give reviewers of projects a tool to assist with: 1) Reviewing proposed projects in an objective manner; and 2) Providing a foundation to create clear feedback and comments based on content of the Architectural Standards. This is paramount given the many changes to State housing laws.

The designer of a building would use the Architectural Standards by picking one of the architectural styles, study its elements, and use the standards to direct them in designing an appropriate building for their project and specific site.

Design Review Board Study Session

On December 8, 2021, the Design Review Board held a study session to provide feedback and comments on the draft FBC, architectural standards and map. During the meeting, the Chair requested additional standards for the California Contemporary architectural style such as requirements for bay windows, suggesting that one of the components of the contemporary style was deeply recessed windows. The board members asked that the consultant provide planning staff and applicants with instruction on how to work within the FBC. The Vice Chair suggested removing the architectural styles referring to Hayward and El Cerrito's FBC. The board members requested that the FBC return to the board at a future dedicated meeting to discuss this item only.

CONCLUSION:

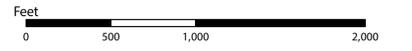
Staff requests comments and feedback from the Planning Commission on the draft Zoning Text and Zoning Map Amendments, including Architectural Standards, implementing the Richmond Livable Corridors Form-Based Code (FBC).

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

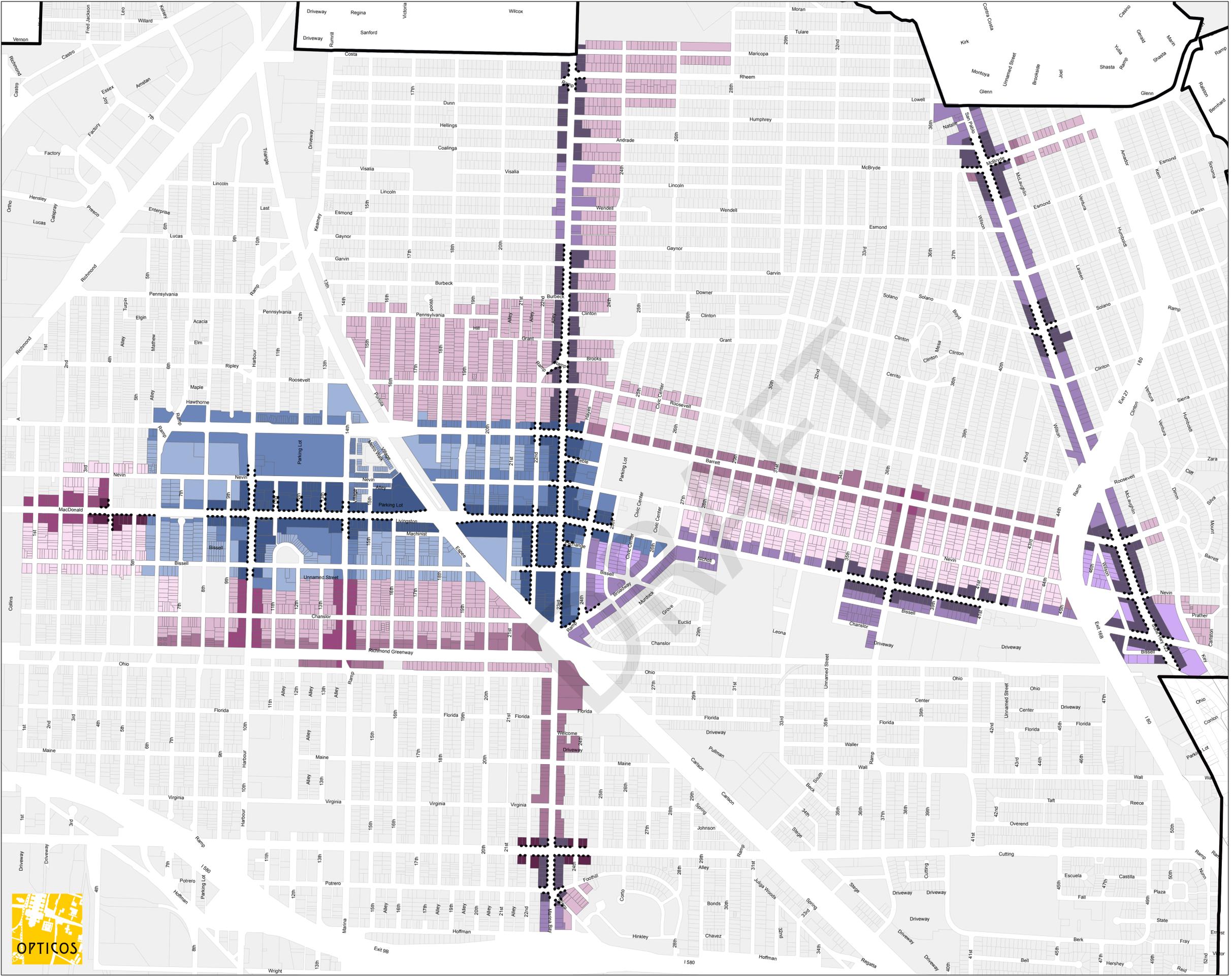
ATTACHMENT 1: Draft FBC Transect Map
ATTACHMENT 2: Existing Zoning Map
ATTACHMENT 3: Existing General Plan Map

EXHIBIT A: RMC Section 15.04.400 to 15.04.406.100 Draft Form Based Code (FBC)
RMC Section 15.04.405 to 15.04.405.100 Draft Architectural Standards

Regulating Plan **DRAFT** Richmond, CA



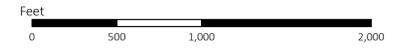
- Legend**
- T4N-30
 - T4N-35
 - T4N-O
 - T4MS-O
 - T4MS
 - T5N-55
 - T5MS-O
 - T5MS
 - T5N-135
 - T5C-O
 - T5C
- 0' Build-To Line Required with Shopfront Frontage



Existing Zoning

Regulating Plan

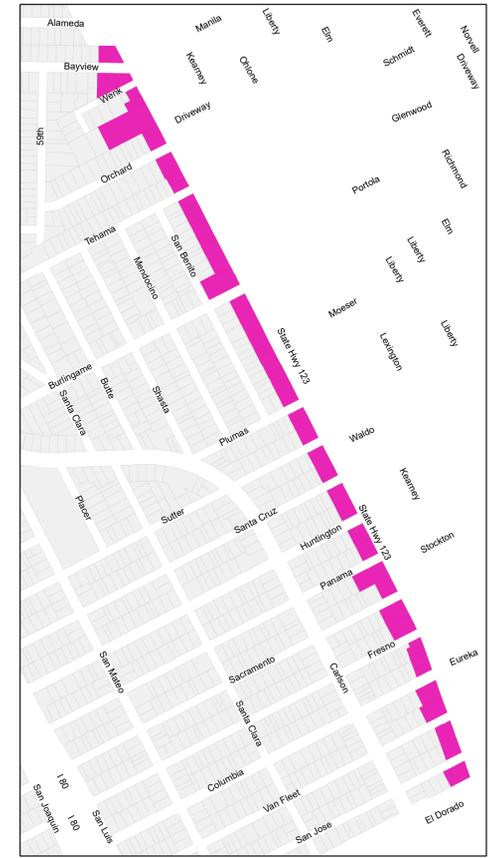
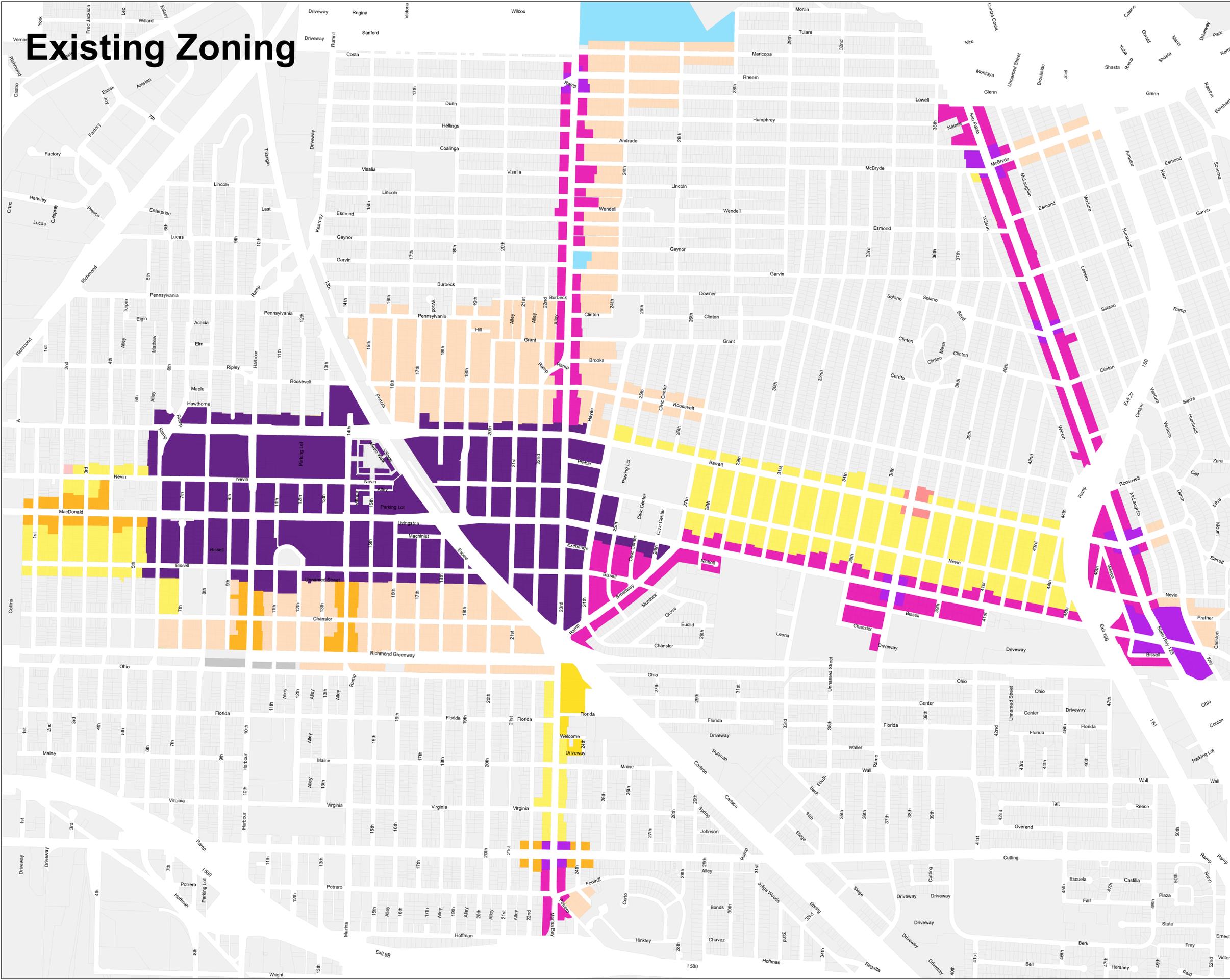
Richmond, CA



Legend

Zoning District ZONING

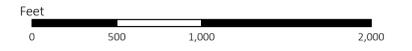
- RL2
- RM2
- CM-1
- CM-2
- CM-3
- CM-4
- CM-5
- LW
- CG
- IL
- PCI
- PR



Existing General Plan Land Use

Regulating Plan

Richmond, CA



Legend

General Plan Land Use

Land Use Designations

- Low-Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Neighborhood Mixed-Use
- Medium Density Mixed-Use (Residential Emphasis)
- Medium Intensity Mixed-Use (Commercial Emphasis)
- Medium Intensity Mixed-Use (Gateway / Community Node)
- High Intensity Mixed Use (Major Activity Center)
- Business/Light Industrial
- Parks and Recreation
- Public, Cultural, and Institutional

