

**Macdonald Avenue Corridor Task Force  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
In-Person Meeting  
Friday, December 12, 2025, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.  
Richmond Room, 450 Civic Center Plaza, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Richmond, California**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Call to order: 11:03 a.m. by Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer

**2. Roll Call & Check In**

**Present:** Councilmember Claudia Jimenez,\* Councilmember Doria Robinson; Richmond Main Street Initiative (RMSI) Executive Director Sarah Wally and Richmond Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Vernon Whitmore  
\*Arrived at 11:09 a.m.

**Absent:** Mayor Eduardo Martinez

**Staff Present:** Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer; Junne Garcia, Management Analyst; Nannette Beacham, Economic Development Director; Lina Velasco, Community Development Director and Tony Tamayo, Chief of Staff Mayor's Office

**3. Agenda Review and Adoption**

Councilmember Doria Robinson asked that an item be added to the meeting agenda for Announcements, to be discussed as Item 8 (a).

Motion was made to approve the December 12, 2025 meeting agenda, as modified, carried unanimously by a voice vote.

**4. City Staff Reports (Verbal)**

Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer, reported the City of Richmond received word that Foods Co across the street from 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Macdonald Avenue had been placed for sale; buildings at 1500 and 1428 Macdonald Avenue at the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Macdonald Avenue had also been listed for sale. Also, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was provided for Services for the Economic Revitalization Strategy for Downtown Richmond and West Macdonald Avenue, with the release date for the RFP scheduled for December 15, 2025. The RFP would be closed on January 23, 2026. The Macdonald Avenue Corridor (MAC) Task Force was asked to review the RFP and provide any comments or suggestions prior to its release.

Nannette Beacham, Economic Development Director, stated the RFP was a priority for the Task Force and included comments made during the summer. Any additional comments and/or concerns should be provided to her as soon as possible and prior to the December 15, 2025 deadline.

Tony Tamayo, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office, reported an upcoming City Council meeting would include an agenda item to consider the addition of four seats to the Task Force. The request included some flexibility in the language to allow the addition of a variety of stakeholders. Invitations had also been sent to the offices of elected officials and agencies to join the Task Force. At this time, he welcomed Gabriel Sandoval from Senator Jesse Arreguin's Office and Henry Symons representing BART.

## **5. Public Comments**

Cordell Hindler, Richmond, invited everyone to the Winter Senior Ball hosted by the Commission on Aging, December 13, 2025, \$50 per person, with El Sol to cater; Contra Costa Mayors Conference, early February 2026, hosted by the City of Richmond, location yet to be determined, \$70 per person including dinner and a drink, R.S.V.P. required; and also in early February 2026, City of Richmond Community Foundation Annual Gala, at the Berkeley Country Club, \$250 per person, which included champagne. He also thanked the Mayor's Office for placing an item on an upcoming City Council meeting agenda to include additional stakeholders for the Task Force.

## **6. Approval of Minutes**

### **a. November 21, 2025 – Regular Meeting**

Mr. de Leon reported two corrections were made to the November 21, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes on Pages 6 and 9, where references to Patrick Spears were corrected to read *Patrick Seals*.

1<sup>st</sup> - Wally, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Robinson approved unanimously, as amended, by a Roll Call vote.

## **7. Presentations, Discussions & Action Items**

### **a. Priority Sites Technical Assistance. RECEIVE a presentation from consultant regarding their findings related to the upcoming 12<sup>th</sup> and Macdonald RFP.**

Jane Lin, Principal, Urban Field Studio, asked each member of the consultant team present to introduce themselves to the Task Force. She provided a PowerPoint presentation of the results of the Priority Sites Technical Assistance Consultant Charrette for 12<sup>th</sup> and Macdonald, Richmond, CA, which included an overview of the Charrette held on October 14, 2025. The Charrette involved issue framing and a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analyses, diagrams and explored scenarios and further refinement of the scenarios.

Ms. Lin described the size of the site at 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Macdonald Avenue as 3.8 acres. The site had been cleared in September 2008, and aerial views of the property were provided from June 2007 prior to clearing, September 2008 after it had been cleaned and a grid pattern from December 1939.

Ms. Lin explained as part of prior proposals, the consultant learned that there was an ambition-market mismatch, retail overestimation and an activation gap. During that time, what changed was the markets, financing conditions, policy environment and environmental requirements. What had not changed was the desire for the original vision; however, conditions still did not support large, high-density mixed-use projects.

The Task Force previously identified its vision, identity and desire for a lively mixed-use destination with active ground floors, celebration of Richmond's history through design, public art and storytelling with the need for a strong anchor-food-entertainment or recreation to draw people to the downtown, with a preference for local unique businesses over national chains. There was also the desire for welcoming public spaces, plazas, play areas and pedestrian paseos, and the project should strengthen the downtown as a whole and not stand alone.

Ms. Lin highlighted developer interview results from representatives from City Ventures, Community Housing Development (CHDC) of North Richmond, AMG Land Development, LLC and the Pulte Group. Based on those interviews, developers identified a feasibility gap and townhome development as the most feasible product while high-density development was not. Developers also desired certainty, clarity and a streamlined process with a preference for fee-simple sales after entitlements. Developers also expressed the need for flexibility in terms of density, infrastructure costs, non-residential space, fee timing and Project Labor Agreement (PLA) requirements.

Ms. Lin also highlighted the SWOT assessment for the project and identified the varied urban design zones surrounding the site including large institutions, traditional residential and commercial and new residential mixed-uses; public space and multimodal connectivity; along with the Macdonald Avenue pedestrian experience.

Ms. Lin explained they had looked at prior proposals for the site including proposals from AF Evans and Warehaus, and learned the ambition was mismatched to what the market could provide. Retail was overestimated in some of the past projects, with a large gap in how to activate. There were physical improvements done along the street very well, which was a great start, but they did not do everything, and they had to continue to work on that with new development. Since those proposals had been presented, the market had changed and become worse and the financing, policy environment and some environmental requirements had also changed; however, the original vision had not changed, although conditions still did not support the larger high-density mixed-use product type.

The site condition was described as mostly vacant parcels needing cleanup, stabilization and visible care with an aging parking garage with uncertain structural conditions, and included a mixed-use quality streetscape with weak activation and low foot traffic.

Utilities and environmental status required updated due diligence and while the zoning supported mixed-use, there was a mandate for active ground-floor frontage on Macdonald Avenue.

The next steps would be to: clean and stabilize the site; remove debris; repair fencing; improve lighting and signage; commission structural seismic evaluation of the garage; complete updated Phase I and targeted Phase II testing; verify utilities, drainage and right-of-way (ROW) conditions; confirm title, easements and parcel boundaries; document zoning/Service Level Agreement (SLA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements; and package findings into a site readiness and due diligence packet.

Ms. Lin described the proposed housing scenarios as high-density, which would provide catalytic development and a high concentration of market-rate development but which was the least financially feasible. The Mid-Density scenario would offer commercial/community space, market-rate housing but would also be less financially feasible. The Townhomes scenario would be the most feasible; an ownership product for Richmond residents but required downzoning with hard-to-meet affordability and prevailing wage requirements.

The High-Density Housing Scenario would be compliant with Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) policies but not compliant with the zoning requirement for ground floor retail. It would be a rental product with 25 minimum percent affordability with an urban character and would provide more density next to transit, helping the City to meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), and help to access funding for other projects. This scenario would include 640 apartments at 167 dwelling units per acre (DUA), eight stories in height, Type 1 for three stories and Type III Wood for the next five stories. The highest occupied floor must be no higher than 75-feet and this scenario would have a TOC compliant parking ratio.

The Mid-Density Housing Scenario would be similar to the Warehouse proposal but would have horizontal mixed-use, a rental product with 25 percent minimum affordability, with vertical mixed-use, retail and community space at the ground level. This scenario included 75 apartments on the north block, 155 apartments on the south block for a total of 230 units at 60-DUA. Commercial space would be up to 20,000 square feet and single-story. The structures would be four stories in height and this scenario would also meet the TOC policies for parking and would use the existing parking structure.

The Low-Density Housing Scenario would include ownership with possible rental affordability, with 25 percent minimum affordability, a suburban character and provide affordable ownership opportunities. This scenario would consist of 96 townhomes, four stories interlocking at 25-DUA with commercial on Macdonald Avenue required. The project would be three stories at a depth of 50 feet with one parking space per unit, tandem tucked under side-by-side and would require the demolition of the parking structure.

Brynn McKiernan continued the PowerPoint presentation and provided an extensive walk-through of the proforma of the three scenarios in addition to the details of the feasibility study.

Councilmember Robinson asked whether any financial analyses had been done for each of the scenarios in terms of what they could produce as income to the City, value of the land and potential economic activity.

Ms. McKiernan acknowledged such an analyses had not been done and was out of the scope of the work of the consultant; however, the scenarios proposed would provide higher revenue to the City of Richmond in terms of property tax revenue and economic output.

Councilmember Jimenez asked whether analyses had been done on affordable housing and whether there was an appetite for affordable housing for the site.

Ms. McKiernan explained that the consultant had looked at market conditions for market rate housing. The City of Richmond's experience with affordable housing was a high-density product with 100 percent affordability, such as the Harbour View Senior Apartments and Nevin Plaza. The City Council would have to consider the funding and financing for those projects. Those projects typically involved a time frame of up to ten years to fully fund. With the knowledge that market rate would be difficult, other financing schemes would have to be considered, such as funding for affordable housing. The consultant's analysis had looked at mixed income development which was 25 percent affordable with some market rate units, but that was not penciling. The consultant acknowledged financing for 100 percent affordable projects would have to be discussed with the knowledge that such development also had a long lead time.

Councilmember Robinson noted the need to consider economic activity in the next round of studies whether affordable or not and consider that the Macdonald Avenue Corridor was the downtown for the City of Richmond, with limited square footage and with places close to transportation, which should be part of the equation as well as figuring out the impact of putting whatever they planned in the corridor based on the City's abilities and taking into account the economy. That should be a consideration for the RFP when an economic development strategy was considered. Also, there was the need to know how affordable low-income housing would impact the ability to build an economic corridor.

Councilmember Robinson added the City had to consider what it wanted in housing diversity along the Macdonald Avenue Corridor, and while not suggesting all high-income development which displaced and resulted in gentrification, she suggested they needed to be open to consider some mixed-income in the area and consider where and when. She noted the City had the Eastern Village development that was very close, with another 450 units and with vacant lots the City owned and there were other opportunities. She emphasized the Task Force should be open to some other ideas.

Councilmember Jimenez wanted to be open to more ideas not just what the market was telling them to do.

Councilmember Robinson emphasized she was not on board with townhome development and would like to see some other options.

Ms. Lin reiterated the uncertainty in the market and the three scenarios as described. She acknowledged they could wait and maintain the current vision while waiting for rents and construction costs to decline, but that was an unknown and the drawback was timing and uncertainty. She noted the City could make the first move and think about major investment to unlock density and new ideas, filling in the gaps and doing all sorts of different things, being flexible as a City. The drawback to that scenario was there may be significant capital the City may not have and there was a risk involved and it may not be a good option to consider. The third option could be to reset the vision for the Macdonald Avenue Corridor and reframe what they wanted the site to do, such as possibly not including housing, and think about other types of uses, such as non-residential programs funded through civic or cultural partnerships. The Task Force could consider moving forward without overpaying on uncertainty.

Ms. Lin continued the PowerPoint presentation and explained that given the size of the feasibility gap and uncertainty of the market, the Task Force could consider the following options: Option 1: Wait until conditions improved; Option 2: The City leads the first move; Option 3: Reset the Vision. She highlighted the details for each of those options.

Ms. Lin explained if the City were to consider resetting the vision, it may consider shifting the vision to civic and cultural uses and explore civic and cultural anchors, not just housing, to create a flexible community serving 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Macdonald Avenue, and an example was provided of the Mexican Heritage Plaza (School of Arts & Culture) in East San Jose.

A civic and cultural anchor could be a Richmond Culture and Innovation Center, a hybrid civic building combining galleries, maker spaces, digital labs, youth arts and community rooms. A Richmond History and Homefront Pavilion could include a partnership with Rosie the Riveter, African-American history groups and local archives bringing history back to the downtown, and a Civic Hub/One-Stop Center could provide customer facing City services co-working for nonprofits, community innovation labs and meeting/event spaces. An example was provided of the SoLA Technology and Entrepreneurship Center (Crenshaw District/South Los Angeles).

A Market Hall and Commercial Hub could include a mix of food stalls, shared kitchens and evening/weekend activation. A Makers & Merchants Collective could include affordable studios, fabrication spaces and storefronts for local creators with rotating pop-up spaces. A Community Commercial Commons could include flexible and subdividable ground floor space that could host farmers markets, festivals, night markets and seasonal events. An example was provided of the Swan's Market in the City of Oakland.

In addition, the East Bay Center - Performing Arts could serve as a Black Box and Mainstage Hybrid Theater, with a flexible seat venue plus rehearsal rooms, classrooms, and creative youth programming. An Evening-Forward Retail Spine could include bars, restaurants, dessert shops, live music venues, and arts-supportive retail that would come alive when the theater let out. Street as Stage could include an outdoor performance plaza with lighting, projection mapping, street seating and regular programming from the East Bay Center – Performing Arts. An example was provided of Degnan Boulevard in Leimert Park, CA.

An Arts Corridor, without housing, could include Macdonald Arts Mile, a connected sequence of murals, sculpture and creative lighting and crosswalk art linking BART to the Civic Center. An Arts & Technology Fusion Lab could include new media, animation, VR, music studios and youth tech training, anchored by partnerships with the Arts Center and local organizations. An Outdoor Arts Park could include flexible open space for festivals, public art, small concerts, food trucks and community gatherings and a “Galley Row” Retail Model could include micro-galleries, artisan shops, and rotating exhibits to turn Macdonald Avenue into an art-forward destination, with an example provided of SoFA (South of First Area) District in San Jose. Additional examples provided included Shaw/U Street Corridor, in Washington D.C., which had strong performing arts anchors, such as “The Black Broadway” with adjacent retail and housing.

In response to Councilmember Robinson, Ms. Lin clarified if the City were to explore an arts or entertainment centric option, adding housing in a smaller scale rather than having the housing drive the project, had not been evaluated. The ideas now being presented were other ideas to possibly reset the vision for the corridor.

Councilmember Jimenez found the scenarios would be challenging with few people living in the area or pedestrian activity in the area. She was uncertain how the scenarios discussed could be sustained in the long-term.

Councilmember Robinson commented that was why she thought if housing may not be the driver, it could be included where possible.

Councilmember Jimenez asked whether temporary uses could be considered and think in the long-term if housing was desired. Possibly, the City could consider investment in something more temporary that could help to revitalize the downtown. As an example, the City could consider potential high-density in the future.

Councilmember Robinson expressed concern with the acre idea, the economic activity and the housing and what would draw people. It was always good to build on assets and the largest asset the City already had that was busting out of the seams was the East Bay Center - Performing Arts. If that use was expanded and the arts corridor invited to be the theme of the downtown, the Center could be used as the core and be expanded, but with programming, not just by the Center. If restaurants had housing above, people especially young people or those with younger families may be happy to live in a vibrant space.

Lina Velasco, Director of Community Development, commented that the arts corridor idea could be an interim investment while the planning and fundraising and other things were being figured out for a future project.

Councilmember Robinson was also uncertain how the consultant’s idea would change the vacant lot.

Ms. Velasco stated the City received feedback about safety activation and getting more people, and while the vacant lot may not be enough to draw more people in, there may be other uses that could be considered, such as art performances and live music.

Councilmember Robinson pointed out the City would be unable to hold special events in the downtown each week and she recommended the RFP include a section about interim opportunities while the City was figuring it out since it would take additional community engagement.

Mr. Tamayo asked whether there would be some flexibility in how the vacant lot could be activated in the interim, and was informed by Ms. Velasco the property was on a list of surplus properties and over time it could be designated as something different, but the use currently was governed by zoning and funding.

Mr. Tamayo explained he was suggesting temporary activation. As an example, the City of Napa had changed its vacant lots into something else but clearly stated that it was an interim use later to be built out.

Vernon Whitmore, Executive Director, Richmond Chamber of Commerce (RCOC), commented from the RCOC's perspective, housing was great, but it could not just be affordable since people with money were needed to support local businesses.

Councilmember Jimenez agreed with the need for different things, but asked who would be willing to pay the rent required for the area since people would likely prefer to pay those rents in other communities like San Francisco or Berkeley. She emphasized the need to have something that was appealing and unique to the area. It seemed to her that the City needed to think about economic activity and think historically why someone should live in downtown Richmond. She recognized that marketing was needed, and suggested exploring temporary uses that could be done now where the City did not have to put in many resources and identify what activities could be opportunities, at the same time the City was seeking an RFP to follow the vision desired for the Macdonald Avenue Corridor.

Councilmember Robinson suggested interim uses were fine, but she had concern with interim investing when there was a big vision. She did not want to see the City limp along for another 20 to 30 years and lose opportunities. The City now had an opportunity with the sale of Foods Co which had been holding space for a really long time. If the City continued to wait and not move forward with a big vision, it may lose the current opportunities and it may be several more years for another opportunity to happen with someone willing to sell a big piece of the puzzle. She pointed out that the potential buyers of the Foods Co property were unknown and she would like a future owner to buy-into the City's vision for the Macdonald Avenue Corridor. As such, it may be possible for the City to get some of the things it wanted, such as housing.

Councilmember Robinson encouraged the Task Force to not focus on interim uses but focus on ensuring the advancement of the bigger vision and then consider the interim uses once that larger vision was on its way.

Councilmember Jimenez also did not want interim uses to take away from the work being done.

Sarah Wally, Executive Director, Richmond Main Street Initiative (RMSI), understood the consultants had done a survey with a handful of developers and planned to interview more. She emphasized the amount of development actively happening in the Bay Area, particularly in the City of San Francisco, with Align Real Estate planning to develop the former Safeway at Webster and Geary in the Fillmore neighborhood, with a number of housing units, some of which would be affordable. While the City of Richmond worked on its marketing strategy for the downtown, the asset in the anchor list in Richmond as a whole was significant in terms of what was here. She was happy to participate in a healthy list of developers.

Ms. Wally reiterated the amount of development occurring in the Bay Area, including development by Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA), an affordable housing developer. She suggested that looking at what developers were doing, such as in the South Bay, was important. She added the areas between 19<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets had a lot to offer for development. She appreciated the numbers provided, had been a developer in the past, and suggested they could chase down what developers were building and learn more about the types of financing being considered, and it would be worthwhile to look at that when considering the big picture for the area.

Stephanie Hagar, Principal, BAE Urban Economics, continued the PowerPoint presentation and detailed the state policies that governed local development, state policies that indirectly shaped feasibility, and federal and federal-adjacent considerations. This included the requirements of the Surplus Land Act, TOC rules, Housing Accountability Act (HAA), CEQA, PLA, prevailing wages, impact of state affordable housing financing programs, and state infrastructure or grant programs in addition to opportunity zones, and financing tools that depended on federal rules such as New Markets Tax Credit Program (NMTC), Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) and proximity to federal facilities that may affect security, frontage, or coordination dynamics.

Ms. Hagar also provided a very extensive and in-depth walk through of what was needed for the RFP, including site readiness, policy clarity, market timing indicators, defining the “must haves” and defining what the City could contribute, as well as providing as much due diligence in the RFP as possible and signaling a willingness to work with the right developer by making the process efficient and adaptable to the market. She also detailed the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and RFP processes and the steps required for each, and explained how developers responded to certainty more than incentives, with encouragement to streamline the path for developers, again clarify the process, set expectations up front and use ministerial tools where possible.

Ms. Hagar further detailed the attractive deal terms for the RFQ/RFP processes. She recommended the Task Force, tighten the RFQ/RFP process and entitlement process as much as possible, consider the RFQ stage to maximize response and vet respondents to evaluate capacity and financial feasibility of the proposed project and reserve the right to return to the short list if a selected developer did not perform. The leading market indicators were also identified.

In terms of when it was the “prime time” to issue an RFQ/RFP, it was recommended when the following aligned: when rents were trending upwards for three to four months, construction costs stabilized or decreased, and comparable cities experienced an increase in development applications for mid-rise housing again. At that time, the City of Richmond could reissue an RFP, reengage developer interest and revisit the higher density concepts from the Charrette discussion.

As to the next steps, the following was recommended: cleanup and stabilize the site, complete key due diligence, advance the civic/arts vision, identify interim activities, clarify the process including policy expectations and SLA implications and create internal alignment roles, identify authority and who would shepherd the project, prepare the developer engagement and define the City investment while actively monitoring and preparing for the “prime time.”

1<sup>st</sup> - Robinson, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Jimenez to extend the MAC Task Force meeting until the completion of Item 7(a), approved unanimously by a Roll Call vote.

Councilmember Robinson asked if there was a reason, outside of capacity, why the City could not act as its own developer and hire an architect and contractor to get the vision and bring in the partners to ensure the City got the vision desired.

Ms. Velasco acknowledged staff capacity was an issue and the City was not a developer. She noted the City was trying to get out of the business of managing properties, in particular, if there was a housing component it would become more difficult as a public agency to do that, and it would be something that had to be considered. That question has been asked of the developers and the developers sought flexibility and indicated they had a typical project they built and their workforce knew how to build. The City liked public-private partnerships, where the City put out the land and maybe some financing and the developer operated and then built the project. The City struggled with maintenance and was starting to think about what that would look like with the need for the City to ensure enough revenue for long-term maintenance costs.

Councilmember Robinson suggested it could be something the City built, but did not operate. She suggested something could be built with the right components for the economic driver for others to operate.

Ms. Velasco commented they were looking at that for community hubs.

Councilmember Robinson suggested if really doing something different and bringing life to the downtown, the City needed to not do what it always did and rather step out of that. She did not want to keep repeating what had been done in the past since there would be the same result. She would like to see the City consider something it didn't normally do, such as strategic options to achieve a different result.

Ms. Wally suggested starting with baby steps, possibly starting with the 920 building that was small and compact. She stated the action of a shovel in the ground was important. Development was happening all around Richmond while Richmond had the most combined acres of City property in the aggregate and could be something to consider.

Mr. Whitmore commented on the number of cranes seen along San Pablo Avenue for development projects that skipped over the City of Richmond.

Councilmember Jimenez suggested there was a need to spend more time on innovative ideas, not the marketplace. She would like to see the Task Force spend more time thinking about new solutions. She suggested the reason the Task Force was created was because this was an important moment, the City Council was willing to step out of its comfort zone of what had been done in the past that had not worked well, and bring something that could help achieve the goal, which was the purpose of the Task Force.

Ms. Wally commented the Task Force had been created for master plan development and they were now discussing an isolated lot. She stated the big plan was also important.

Councilmember Jimenez disagreed the City should continue to follow the market; she believed there was another way.

Ms. Wally explained the totality of this allowed a better look from 6<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Streets and Bissell to Barrett Avenues, with 12<sup>th</sup> Street in the middle of all that potential development.

Ms. Velasco was grateful for the analysis which underscored that if the City relied on market conditions alone, it would never move anywhere. The Task Force needed to think about innovation and how to move forward. The City would repeat past mistakes if relying on the market alone and next steps had to be considered. She found it helpful to better understand why RFPs were issued and projects never built. She looked forward to figuring this out with the Task Force and thanked the members for their feedback.

Council member Robinson understood this meant the City would be holding off on the RFP release and needed to talk about bigger visions. She recommended that the RFP be paused and return to the Task Force on the next agenda to allow a discussion of alternative approaches.

**8. Action Item Recap**

a. Announcements

Councilmember Robinson reported she was going to provide an announcement about Foods Co but understood that had already been addressed by staff.

Mr. de Leon reported the next meeting of the MAC Task Force would be January 13, 2026. He wished everyone Happy Holidays.

**9. Adjourn: 12:49 p.m.**