

**Macdonald Avenue Corridor Task Force  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
In-Person Meeting  
January 27, 2026 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 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: 11:04 a.m. by Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer.

**2. Roll Call & Check In**

**Present:** Mayor Eduardo Martinez; Councilmember Claudia Jimenez; Vice Mayor Doria Robinson; Sarah Wally, Executive Director, Richmond Main Street Initiative (RMSI); and Vernon Whitmore, Executive Director, Richmond Chamber of Commerce

**Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer and Junne Garcia, Management Analyst

**3. Agenda Review and Adoption**

The January 27, 2026 meeting agenda was approved as shown. No vote was taken.

**4. City Staff Reports**

Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer, reported the Macdonald Avenue Corridor (MAC) Task Force by-laws had been discussed during the January 13, 2026 Task Force meeting, with staff working on a draft version to be provided to the Task Force for review and approval at a future meeting.

Tony Tamayo, Mayor's Office, Chief of Staff, reported three new Task Force members were anticipated to be seated on the Task Force, with the by-laws to establish the terms of office and the like, as laid out by the City Clerk's Office. He asked whether the by-laws should be amended to reflect that the term would expire at the conclusion of the Task Force, although members of the Task Force asked what would happen if the Task Force was extended. It was his understanding the Task Force membership would expire at the "sunset date" to be decided upon, with an opportunity to renew.

**5. Public Comments**

Cordell Hindler, Richmond, invited everyone to the Contra Costa Mayors Conference on February 5, 2026 at the City of Richmond Country Club, R.S.V.P. required, \$80 per person.

Mr. Hindler also highlighted the Richmond Community Foundation Annual Gala on February 7, 2026 at the Berkeley Country Club from 5:30 to 10:00 p.m., \$250 per person. He was also pleased new members would soon join the Task Force.

Samantha Torres, representing Richmond United Soccer Club, a 30-year, all-volunteer non-profit organization serving Richmond families, was excited to learn about the Task Force, particularly the interest in activating the vacant lots on Macdonald Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street. She reported three years ago, she brought forward a proposal to the Mayor for temporary use of the vacant lots for youth soccer programming. At the time, it had been declined due to a pending agreement with a developer, but to date the lots had remained vacant. At this time, she was renewing her interest and noted the vacant lots could be activated immediately to serve the community with temporary soccer programming. This would align with the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup this summer, which would bring hundreds of youths and families daily, creating positive activity, safety and connection along the corridor. This activation would also directly support existing programming at the MVP lot on Tuesdays and Thursdays, helping to create consistent coordinated community use across Macdonald Avenue. She asked for support to use the temporary vacant lots on Macdonald Avenue between 11, 12 and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets, starting with soccer programming for a City Council with an approved Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or low-cost land use agreement.

Ms. Torres added that Richmond United Soccer Club already operated at the highest standards required for club soccer, was actively applying for grants and foundation funding to keep its programs affordable and accessible but needed land access that allowed them to operate without displacing other sports, disrupting City programs or relying on parks maintenance. A temporary space could help to alleviate the burden of field shortages until the development plans began at those lots. She asked the Task Force to agendize a presentation from the Richmond United Soccer Club at its next meeting so they could share a proposal in more detail and discuss the next steps.

## **6. Approval of Minutes**

- a. January 13, 2026 – Regular Meeting  
1<sup>st</sup> – Wally, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Whitmore approved unanimously, as shown, by a Roll Call vote.

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

- a. **Priority Sites Technical Assistance. DISCUSS presentation from consultant given on 12/12/2025.**

Mr. de Leon explained this item had been requested at the January 13, 2026 Task Force meeting to discuss the presentation and was intended as an open-ended discussion.

Vice Mayor Robinson commented the idea was that the consultant brought up a number of compelling ideas and the Task Force had not yet provided feedback. Due to current market conditions, no housing solution was financially viable.

Councilmember Jimenez understood there was the potential for viable solutions but not in the density the City would like to see.

Vice Mayor Robinson commented a townhouse scenario was barely viable for a developer, with little profit and not really an attractive option. The consultant presented a few alternative scenarios, which focused on different arts or recreation complexes and examples had been provided of different locations, some around a recreation complex, arts center or a temporary food market. She hoped the Task Force could discuss whether there was a pathway where the Task Force would be interested.

Councilmember Jimenez was having difficulty with the idea of not having housing given the need, but she recognized they needed to look at the whole area. Before she could provide input on what could be developed on the 12<sup>th</sup> Street lot, she would like to see the Strategic Plan outline how many housing units could be built. She preferred to see more housing units built in the downtown area to revitalize the downtown. One of the things that would help would be to have more units of housing of varying income levels. She was uncertain how they could discuss the consultant's different scenarios, such as a possible community center and the story they wanted to tell, which was more visionary, and it would be easier for her to have a conversation about what she wanted to see on the vacant lot.

Mayor Martinez was confused how the City could reach its state housing quota if it was unable to build housing in the downtown. He was concerned that economics were dictating what the City would look like, and he was uncertain exactly where housing could pencil out if not viable in the downtown.

Sarah Wally, Executive Director, Richmond Main Street Initiative (RMSI), explained the consultant's scope had been isolated and was a quick scope, with a focus on the vacant lot on 12<sup>th</sup> Street. This effort had been in motion prior to the formation of the Task Force, which was to focus on a larger Master Plan that reached from 8<sup>th</sup> Street up to 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. The City's opportunities included a look at the entire Master Plan and developable lands, ability to work on policy carve outs on surplus lands, and the opportunity for large-and small-scale development. While the consultant was looking at one lot, and admittedly not part of the scope, the consultant had not included the other considerations such as leveraging City assets and what incentive programs might look like. She commented the larger plan would be with housing, mixed-use and entertainment to be able to get them where they needed to be and also get more in-depth with the housing requirements.

Vice Mayor Robinson suggested reconsidering the opportunity to create a "there-there" reason to come to the downtown. She liked that kind of thematic approach, and if the City wanted to use one of the places it should make a concerted impact and along with that possibly ask the consultant and the Community Development Director about the targeted number of units attempting to be developed in the downtown. She wanted to know what that number was to be able to prioritize the different spaces available and try to understand where that target number of units could be in the downtown area.

Vice Mayor Robinson could not imagine a successful downtown without new housing and recommended that the Task Force ask the Community Development Director the number of units the City was required to build pursuant to state requirements and as shown in the City's Housing Element, or another number that should be considered, particularly as the City pulled away from development along the shoreline.

Vernon Whitmore, Executive Director, Richmond Chamber of Commerce (RCOC), agreed with the comments but suggested the consultant had not taken into account the City's intermobility. No one had what Richmond had, which was a big selling point for people all over the Bay Area. People needed to know that, which was a huge selling point. By giving up housing that was needed, there should be a way to make up for that with a mix of housing plus arts and culture in the downtown. He suggested there was a way to achieve that and agreed they needed information from the Community Development Director on the targeted number of housing units.

Vice Mayor Robinson suggested that information on housing units along with information on the displacements happening since the City was not moving forward with certain projects was required to ensure making those projects happen in the downtown.

Councilmember Jimenez would like to see opportunities to dream big about what could be done in the downtown. While they could get more information from the Community Development Director, the Task Force was to focus on creating a new vision and it was not just about the lots, but about what they would create for the downtown and that was the conversation she wanted to have about the Request for Proposal (RFP). While she understood the current market constraints, the City was also considering a new way to finance housing since it would not get to the desired vision if continuing to allow the market to drive this effort. She again asked whether they should allow the market to drive the City's vision and suggested there was a tremendous opportunity in the region with progressive leadership with creative financing, and there was an opportunity to think about what new financing mechanisms were available where the City could be a partner.

Ms. Wally described it as Master Planning with creative financing and if they drive it through with what the City desired, there would be a match with those who would build the brick and mortar. As an example, she referred to the City of San Francisco where the Prado Group had launched new housing developments with creative financing created to tax districts. The cities of San Jose and Santa Clara also offered examples.

Mayor Martinez agreed with the need to explore new financial instruments.

Vice Mayor Robinson would like to see the consultant take the Task Force deeper into the examples provided to better understand and look at actual places in the world that had done the concepts the consultant presented and discuss what had or had not been successful.

At this time, the Task Force reviewed the PowerPoint presentation which had been presented during the December 12, 2025 Task Force meeting.

Mayor Martinez suggested considering this modularly in that if they pursued an arts corridor without housing, he would like to know if the housing could be added afterwards.

Vice Mayor Robinson commented the downtown corridor had no center and if they wanted to have dancing outside, as an example, there was no location where one could have people gather for such an event, like a concert or dance classes in the summer. They should consider a gathering center to allow things to be hosted other than having to shut down the street for community events, and around that gathering area there could be cafés and the like which would be an attractive space for people to gather. Otherwise, there was no architectural structure to encourage people to use the space.

Mayor Martinez commented he looked at the plaza at City Hall as a cultural center, but it had proven difficult and while different organizations wanted to hold specific events to showcase dance, as an example, the cost was too much due to requirements for permits, security, insurance and other requirements. If they were to start having people holding events in the plaza when the downtown was built, people could then migrate to the downtown and they would not have to start the migration from scratch. Those were the things they needed to consider and find solutions to be able to develop.

Vice Mayor Robinson agreed there was a need to address the barriers of permitting that prevented people from using public spaces.

Councilmember Jimenez commented she was working with the art community and was learning from that experience. She acknowledged the challenges with the permitting process in terms of insurance requirements and she would be happy to bring back to the Task Force what she learned from that experience.

Mayor Martinez suggested focusing not only on the future but the present. He noted that FIFA was coming to the Bay Area, and the City should consider setting up large screens at the vacant lot or other places to start bringing people downtown so they could start experiencing the Richmond they were missing.

Vice Mayor Robinson commented that could be considered as part of the next agenda item and they could discuss short-term uses and solutions and other ideas.

In response to Councilmember Jimenez as to whether the consultant would be doing more work or whether the consultant could do the analysis as suggested by the Vice Mayor, Mr. de Leon suggested that be discussed with the Community Development Director.

Vice Mayor Robinson understood the work done by the consultant had involved a Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC) Grant, which had had been in play prior to the formation of the Task Force and there were certain parameters required as part of the grant.

b. **Downtown Richmond Walking Tours. DISCUSS tours held for elected officials on 12/18/2025 and 10/02/2025.**

Ms. Wally reported there had been three walking tours which had started with Small Business Week and participation of Assemblymembers in September and a walking tour in December, which included participation from Senator Jesse Arreguín. There had been great attendance during the walking tours from elected officials. There had also been discussions at the East Bay Center-Performing Arts with feedback from the City Manager's Office and City Councilmembers to formulate "soft" and legislative asks" regarding the properties and possible carve outs. Some back study work had been done with Assemblymember Buffy Wick's team about what some carve outs could look like. There had also been discussions about funding, financing and other opportunities and what it looked like legislatively, and in terms of creative funding and financing. The Task Force could delve into the creative financing and funding opportunities to match what they were looking at for the desired outcome.

Ms. Wally understood Senator Arreguín's Office was going to draft some legislative asks to be submitted before the first part of February around surplus land adjustments. She added that walking tours would continue every month on the fourth Thursday of each month at 10:30 a.m.

Councilmember Jimenez asked about the goal of the walking tours.

Vice Mayor Robinson explained the goals of the walking tours was to show support and resources to help the project to revitalize the downtown corridor and the intent to have people in positions to change policies, provide access to resources, attract the kind of developers that could be partners in this effort and ensure people who interacted were embracing the wider vision.

Ms. Wally added the walking tours were about exposure.

Mayor Martinez wanted to inspire residents to understand the treasures in the City of Richmond in the downtown area and get excited about the corridor projects the City had in mind.

Vice Mayor Robinson suggested the Task Force discuss what had worked well during the walking tours and what could be done better. She suggested the stop at the East Bay Center-Performing Arts had been a strength since it showed a downtown jewel many did not know existed and showed the restoration of a historical building as to capacity and ability to serve residents and create a destination, which was important to connect to the successful restoration of a downtown space and which brought energy and light. She suggested they could do a better job highlighting some of the other gems in the downtown, such as stopping by Diego's Place or the Bistro, as examples. She also suggested it was really important to walk and be in the 12<sup>th</sup> Street project area so people could really see how big and central it was, although more time should be spent on Macdonald Avenue rather than Nevin Avenue which was not the economic driver. She would rather see the tour be changed to be more on Macdonald Avenue.

Councilmember Jimenez asked whether there was any way to plan for the walking tour.

Ms. Wally reiterated the walking tours were held every fourth Thursday of the month at 10:30 a.m., with the walking tours announced on social media. The walking tours were open to whoever wanted to participate. As the Task Force got more traction, developers could be invited. The tour could also be changed to be more Macdonald Avenue driven which was the strategic area driver, as opposed to the prior focus of the walking tours. She recognized that having the main flow on Macdonald Avenue was critical and what they liked to call “anchors assets, futures and benefits,” which was all there on Macdonald Avenue, between transportation, the street and the infrastructure with the anchor businesses holding the area together.

Mr. Whitmore suggested developers be invited to participate in the walking tours sooner than later to allow a reality check on what they were thinking about downtown Richmond.

Mayor Martinez suggested the question should be to developers, how they could make the City’s vision a reality rather than have developers tell the City what could and could not be done.

Ms. Wally emphasized that was the charge of the Task Force; the vision and how it could be leveraged to actually get it built. She suggested it could be built through all of the available mechanisms.

Mayor Martinez reported that people had noticed the walking tours and asked about them.

Vice Mayor Robinson would like to have a graphic designer look at the handouts for the walking tours and lay them out nicely but she was uncertain there was a budget for that work in the Community Development Department. She asked whether someone was on-call to do the work, something that was professional and polished.

Mayor Martinez suggested his office may be able to fill that need.

**c. Richmond City Center – For Sale. DISCUSS the sale of this property located across the street from 12<sup>th</sup> and Macdonald.**

Ms. Wally reported the property broker met with Mr. de Leon and Management Analyst Junne Garcia, on January 23, 2026, to discuss the status of the property. There had been no movement on subletting the Walgreens space, but the restoration company was present during the meeting and hopefully repairs would start to happen. The property was for sale but there had been no serious interest to date. The sales price was pricey, a little under \$24 million and the property was half-vacant. The conditions of the property had been changed, the property owner was using a local landscape company (Rubicon), which was extending out the infrastructure repairs such as the paving of the shopping center hopefully in the spring, but there was little interest in leasing the vacant spaces, The shopping center was challenged by Walgreens paying the rent and the few vacancies did not lend a sense of urgency. The property was listed on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) and there were potential grants for façade improvements and small businesses could make individual applications.

Councilmember Jimenez found that development showed it did not work. She was curious why funds were being spent to renovate the façade if there may be plans to demolish the building and rebuild. Ideally, she would prefer newer development with more current architecture and described the current parking lot configuration as a lot of concrete that was not working. She heard from some people of the need for more buildings that were street friendly.

Ms. Wally noted the property was privately-owned, the existing businesses had leases and there were attempts to upgrade some of the small businesses, and in the short term some had extended leases. She acknowledged the old-style architecture with parking in the front and the building at the back, similar to Hilltop Plaza, with a preference for a more modern style with development in the front on the main street.

Mayor Martinez suggested looking into ways cities worked with private developers to create a city that worked for everyone.

Vice Mayor Robinson asked whether the City could do some research on the kind of developers who had collaborated with other cities around the nation and who the City of Richmond may like to work with and figure out who those developers were, and see if they could be attracted to Richmond and possibly the City could host a tour specific to that property.

Mayor Martinez reported he had met with some developers who were actually community-centered and when he shared with them his ideas, they indicated a desire to work with the City and possibly those developers could be solicited for input.

Mr. Whitmore left the meeting at 11:55 a.m.

Vice Mayor Robinson suggested drafting a list of developers and not limiting themselves to developers that only worked in the Bay Area, and those that only did those types of projects, or who the City of Richmond already knew, but look out into the world and see who was doing exciting projects and come up with a list of people who could be invited to look at the site.

Ms. Wally suggested concurrently with the draft of the Request for Proposal (RFP) the Task Force could ask what an incentive package looked like, what were other cities doing as incentives to leverage assets, with examples of creative financing in the Bay Area, and also create a developer list for Master Plan developments throughout the country that were happening, and look concurrently as to what the legislative funding and/or policy looked like, so that they were doing all that work in parallel with the consultant for the RFP for the Economic Revitalization Strategy, and build information going forward. As they progressed, there were many developers they could think of that were doing such work and they could discuss how to add them in, refine the talking points, and see what they were building.

Mayor Martinez wanted to ensure whoever was chosen was able to understand the City's vision and add to it.

Vice Mayor Robinson suggested this could translate to the creation of a list of those kinds of developers and the Task Force could invite and host a particular group and have a very well-produced tour.

1<sup>st</sup> – Jimenez, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Wally approved unanimously, to extend the Task Force meeting to discuss Item 7(d), carried unanimously by a Roll Call vote, with Mr. Whitmore absent.

d. **RFP – Economic Revitalization Strategy – Downtown Richmond. REVIEW, COMMENT and PROVIDE DIRECTION to staff.**

Mr. de Leon reported the RFP had been distributed to the Task Force on January 20, 2026 and included comments made by Ms. Wally. The RFP for the Economic Revitalization Strategy, planned to use the approved list of economic analysis vendors who received approval from the City Council in December 2025. He welcomed any additional comments and direction.

Councilmember Jimenez asked that the RFP include a financial analysis of the vacant lots. She wanted to see a plan that was “outside the box,” not just that there were empty lots, but see what they could do. She wanted that analysis which was more than just the vacant lots and it was important to have the financial status of each of the lots and potential creation of new lots. She wanted the information because she wanted to know how much a plan could cost.

Vice Mayor Robinson noted the plan would not be done in one fell swoop and the costs would change over time. She would like to see language included in the project objectives that was explicit, such as adding a bullet point which states “an examination of development opportunities that include both vacant lots, reduce properties and adjacent properties to create a destination location or other kinds of anchors that could drive economic development in the downtown,” and add another bullet point for “a plan that included a minimum number of new housing units.”

Councilmember Jimenez asked that a bullet point be added about “the financial information of the lots that were vacant and the current financial status of the potential lots.”

Vice Mayor Robinson suggested the consultant also consider the impacts of a possible vacancy tax and whether or not that would be a good tool to help move stagnant or underutilized properties. She asked that be included as a deliverable to consider a possible vacancy tax and whether that was a good tool to move forward.

Ms. Wally highlighted her recommended amendments to the RFP, as provided to staff and which included requests for the consultant to conduct an inventory of City property, private property existing conditions, financial condition and the consultant to add an infrastructure assessment. In terms of qualifications, she suggested someone who was invested and understood real estate development, had funding and financing experience, and experience with public-private partnerships and funding strategies.

Councilmember Jimenez would also like more information on any contamination on the vacant lots, particularly if future housing was considered.

Vice Mayor Robinson suggested under the conditions assessment they could add a specific call-out to consider contaminated properties and any impacts to potential development.

Ms. Wally stated on Page 2 of the RFP, she added “commercial” to the statement about maritime, industrial and residential, so they could get a broader response to the RFP, and on Page 4, an assessment of historical development proposals was added.

Vice Mayor Robinson suggested the consultant draw from potential historical assets mapped for the downtown. She understood the Historical Preservation Committee had a list and it would be beneficial to have that information overlaid on the downtown for a reidentification of the potential historic buildings that would qualify. She asked that a historical overlay be one of the deliverables to identify the buildings already identified on the existing list so they could see where those buildings were located.

Mayor Martinez suggested the buildings be evaluated in terms of costs whether it would cost more to renovate, tear down or rebuild.

Ms. Wally reported a Development Analysis had been prepared by Perkins & Will around 13-years ago, which looked at Harbor Way South to 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Bissell to Macdonald Avenues, and envisioned all of those properties being part of new development. It was important to have those studies and look at the vision, which was where public-private partnerships could step in. She also suggested Page 5 of the RFP should add “projected sales and property taxes revenues based on different scenarios,” and to Page 10 in terms of the deliverables and timeline, she recommended adding a “six-month draft.”

Vice Mayor Robinson also suggested in terms of the timeline in the RFP that not only a six-month draft be included but community feedback on the initial draft, because there was comprehensive community feedback included as part of the tasks, which should be explicitly included in the timeline.

The meeting ended abruptly at this time.

## **8. Action Item Recap**

No recap was provided.

## **9. Adjourn: 12:08 p.m.**