

**Macdonald Avenue Corridor Task Force
Regular Meeting Minutes
In-Person Meeting
January 13, 2026 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Richmond Room, 450 Civic Center Plaza, 1st 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: Councilmember Claudia Jimenez; Councilmember Doria Robinson*; Sarah Wally, Executive Director, Richmond Main Street Initiative (RMSI); and Vernon Whitmore, Executive Director, Richmond Chamber of Commerce
*Arrived at 11:07 a.m.

Absent: Mayor Eduardo Martinez

Staff Present: Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer; Junne Garcia, Management Analyst and Nannette Beacham, Economic Development Director

3. Agenda Review and Adoption

1st - Wally, 2nd - Whitmore, to approve the December 12, 2025 meeting agenda, as shown, carried unanimously by a voice vote.

4. City Staff Reports

Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer, reported a Request for Proposal (RFP) had been drafted for the Downtown Economic Revitalization Plan, with comments and edits offered by Community Development Director Lina Velasco and Councilmember Doria Robinson. All edits were being compiled with a draft to be presented to the Macdonald Avenue Corridor Task Force no later than January 20, 2026, to allow a review of the document and comments to be provided at the next Task Force meeting scheduled for January 27, 2026. The RFP for the 12th and Macdonald Avenue activation for the space for development was on hold pending review of the Downtown Economic Revitalization Plan or a survey.

Councilmember Jimenez expressed concern with the RFP being put on hold and asked of the timeline.

Nannette Beacham, Economic Development Director, explained the RFP was ready to go.

However, Ms. Beacham noted that based on the last Task Force meeting and while the consultants had done a lot of work around potential development, it was very important to know who they wanted to reach out to. She hoped they could change the request to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to see who was really interested rather than for a full out RFP. Based on her experience with some other developers, there had been little to no interest in developing the site. She was hesitant to issue a full RFP as a result. In terms of the timeline, she hoped to have an RFQ out by mid-year, and have a plan moving forward concurrently with the consultant. Hopefully, with the consultant there could be a 90- to 120-day turnaround for the Strategic Plan.

Councilmember Robinson understood if there was a Strategic Plan first that would guide the RFQ, and without the Strategic Plan they would be winging it and may not get responses.

Ms. Beacham acknowledged based on the comments provided at the last Task Force meeting that there were many issues for nonprofits and people were just not interested if the project did not pencil out.

Sarah Wally, Executive Director, Richmond Main Street Initiative (RMSI), added the consultant who presented to the Task Force had looked at it as an isolated property. The Task Force was looking at the area from Bissell to Barrett Avenues with that part of the RFQ, and 12th Street was part of the Strategic Master Plan. A developer of interest would probably have keener eyes on other development potential in the downtown area, as opposed to a “spot or isolated property,” and while they wanted the work to be concurrent with the Strategic Master Plan and with the 12th Street property, possibly some of the wording could be adjusted in the RFQ to discuss it as part of the totality of the downtown development to allow an alignment with the development at 12th Street and other properties that could be developed, and there could be interest from a developer that may be looking at some of the other properties.

Councilmember Jimenez understood the desire to have a Strategic Plan to drive the entire area, not just the lot on 12th Street and Macdonald Avenue, which made sense. With that understanding, and when reviewing the RFP for the Strategic Plan, the timeline should also be considered. She commented the Community Development Director had previously reported the City had some projects moving forward and there was a need for financing, and they had to think about the funding that needed to be considered and whether they could consider the approaches used by other cities that put money into development. She challenged staff to bring more ideas for consideration rather than the way things had been done in the past that was not working.

Councilmember Jimenez recognized the presence of representatives from the State Senate and Assembly and suggested as they thought about potential funding, the leadership from Assemblymember Buffy Wicks and Senator Jesse Arreguín would be important, so they could also think about what resources could be considered to ensure this project happened.

Ms. Wally described it as an incentive package and an opportunity for the City to leverage its assets in a bundled package, knowing how development happened and with the City being a key player and allowing creativity to come into play, with the desire and willingness of the Task Force, the City of Richmond, and the community to really get what they wanted in a Master Plan. That participation and creativity along with assistance from Senator Arreguín and Assemblymember Buffy Wicks' offices, would help inform the process to seek opportunities.

Councilmember Robinson asked whether the RFP specifically stipulated that the contractor would help the City research funding opportunities or funding mechanisms.

Ms. Beacham was uncertain and would have to review the specific language. When she had been involved in affordable housing that had been a given, but it should be specifically stated in the RFP.

Councilmember Robinson suggested specifically in-lieu of not having a Redevelopment Agency, she would like to know what mechanisms other cities used and what mechanisms could be used or created to facilitate this scale of development, which should be included in the RFP. She agreed with Councilmember Jimenez with the need to focus on the Strategic Plan, expedite it and ensure it was moving at a concerted pace, not slowed down or held back. She wanted the Strategic Plan to be the most important item on the agenda, not other presentations, or other things that took time away from moving the project forward.

Vernon Whitmore, Executive Director, Richmond Chamber of Commerce (RCOC), agreed those were important points. In a meeting with a developer this morning with the cities of Albany and Pinole, they had discussed how those cities helped with financing to narrow the gap for some projects to get up and running. One project was a veteran's project and it was good to reach out to the surrounding cities in the Bay Area to learn what they had done. He also agreed the timeline was important, with the Task Force to pull things together with as little red tape as possible to be able to bring the project to fruition.

Gabriel Sandoval, representing Senator Jesse Arreguín's Office, reported the Senator's staff had met with the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) a couple of months ago and discussed the Supernova Funding, which typically did affordable housing projects. They learned that unfortunately many of the available grants were very competitive.

Many projects ended up almost having perfect scores. The projects were rated based on need, affordability, and some included bonus qualifiers. As an example, a project located in the City of Pinole for veterans included a bonus qualifier. That typically took a project over the edge and HCD ranked its projects almost 98, 99 out of 100, and the majority of the projects got that rating.

The things that pushed those projects over the edge as compared to other projects was developments for veterans, seniors or for first-time developers and projects with a bonus qualifier were usually the projects that got HCD funding.

Mr. Sandoval also reported in the same meeting that Senator Arreguín's staff learned when HCD provided the project funding that the funds were provided after construction and developers were required to obtain a construction loan to build.

Councilmember Robinson asked whether the City had documentation listing all of the different existing funding sources and their proclivities to allow the Task Force to know the tool box when it reached that point in the project.

Ila Esuf, representing State Assembly Buffy Wicks, reported Community Development Director Lina Velasco had been discussing those topics and looking beyond affordable housing and how it was highly competitive and difficult to get funding absent the bonus qualifiers. Research could be done to see if there were other incentives for developers who were not focused solely on affordable housing. There had also been discussions about possible legislation that could make some of the grants more flexible, and while that may not be likely, those were the types of conversations staff was having. There may also be questions for HCD and staff could play a role in having those conversations. She understood Ms. Velasco was very versed in the back end but she could also help.

Ms. Beacham suggested the presentation the consultant provided at the prior Task Force meeting could be shared. There was a goal for three different options, and based on the research for the area, there was already a high concentration of affordable housing. Based on conversations the consultant had with developers, they found that interest may be leaning more towards retail and market rate development. The volume and wish list the City wanted in terms of the number of units did not pencil out, and that was a concern for bringing developers to the City of Richmond. She agreed they needed to match dollars or have some kind of incentive. She cited Nystrom Village as an example, and while an affordable housing project, the project involved \$2 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for pre-development, which she suggested was a huge incentive.

Councilmember Robinson suggested that presentation be agendaized for a future agenda since the Task Force had asked questions but had not considered the recommendations the consultant had identified, and the Task Force had not provided its thoughts on the presentation as a group.

Ms. Beacham added the Task Force had also not been briefed on the walking tour.

5. Public Comments

Cordell Hindler, Richmond, invited everyone to the New Year's Mega-Mixer on January 26, 2026 at La Strada Restaurant free to RCOC members and \$12.50 per person.

Mr. Hindler also invited everyone to the Contra Costa Mayors Conference on February 5, 2026 in the City of Richmond, to be held either at the Richmond Auditorium or Richmond Country Club, R.S.V.P. required, \$70 per person; and the Richmond Community Foundation, Annual Gala, February 7, 2026, Berkeley Country Club 5:30 to 10:00 p.m., \$250 per person with champagne and appetizers. He added he was working on some projects for economic development, but could not share them at this time.

6. Approval of Minutes

a. December 12, 2025 – Regular Meeting

Ms. Beachman identified a typographical error on Page 2 of the December 12, 2025 meeting minutes under the heading for Item 7. Presentations, Discussions & Action Items with the heading for item (a) to be revised to read: *Priority Sites Technical Assistance. RECEIVE a presentation from consultant regarding their findings related to the upcoming 12th and Macdonald RFP.*

1st – Wally, 2nd – Robinson approved unanimously, as amended, by a Roll Call vote.

7. Presentations, Discussions & Action Items

a. **MacDonald Avenue Corridor Task Force By-Laws**

Mr. de Leon provided an overview of the Macdonald Avenue Corridor Task Force by-laws, and noted the Task Force was a Brown Act body and prior City of Richmond task forces had adopted the rules of order established by the City Council. The Richmond City Council adopted Amended Procedures and Orders on September 23, 2025, and the Task Force may adopt and follow the same procedures and orders or set its own by-laws and agendas. The Task Force had been created in September 2025 with the goal *to deliver a list of comprehensive recommendations to the City Council for the revitalization of the Macdonald Avenue Corridor. Recommendations would include short term actions, mid-term strategies and a concrete long-term vision.*

Councilmember Jimenez wanted to see the task force complete its mission and meet the timeline as directed by the City Council, with the establishment of milestones.

Councilmember Robinson understood a final report from the Task Force was to be completed by the end of the year and possibly include some milestones, with a report out, which would push the Task Force to ensure outcomes. That could be discussed now or at a future meeting, with possibly consideration of a draft vision or report out by mid-year.

Councilmember Jimenez commented as an example that meeting the goals of the Strategic Plan could be a milestone that was reported out to the City Council.

Ms. Beacham understood the Community Development Director had a list of consultants who would likely respond and suggested it would not be a year-long project for the Strategic Plan to be prepared. She recommended a report out prior to the City Council Recess.

Councilmember Robinson suggested a report out should be done in the venue of the City Council and also there should be a couple of community meetings before the establishment of a final vision to allow people to interact with the vision before finalization. She suggested a mid-year report out to the City Council and then start the more formal feedback process with the consultant. Some community meetings for additional feedback could also be considered prior to the final draft and a final presentation, after which there would be implementation and then the Task Force would end after the plan was done or consider what body would move on to ensure implementation.

Mr. de Leon asked whether the Task Force would like to adopt the Procedures and Orders set by the City Council for the procedures of the Macdonald Avenue Corridor Task Force meetings, such as agenzizing future items, public comment and the like.

In terms of adding additional members to the Task Force and what the representation should be, and in response to Councilmembers Jimenez and Robinson, Mr. de Leon clarified that would be set forth by the Procedures and Orders and be part of the by-laws.

1st – Jimenez, 2nd – Wally, that the Macdonald Avenue Corridor Task Force will use the Procedures and Orders set forth by the City Council, with the addition of a timeline of a draft presentation to the City Council mid-year. Also, adding a time for community meetings to gather additional feedback and having the final draft for implementation, approved unanimously by a Roll Call vote.

After the motion and further discussing the timelines, Ms. Wally commented on the discussions for a developer list, funding list opportunities and RFQ for the large parcel, and suggested all of the information be moved forward at the same time to ensure a good analysis with the consultant and the Task Force of all the critical and valuable information that would produce an action plan. Concurrently, the Task Force could look at other cities like Detroit, Michigan; Long Beach, San Jose and Emeryville, California and review what those cities had done with their incentive plans with developers and get all of that information together. She also understood information was forthcoming on the Metrowalk II development.

Councilmember Robinson would like to see the Task Force focus on the things that needed to be done to set things up to bring the consultant in and keep moving. It was important to be clear and have an intentional ask as they dreamed up the vision and that the plan not just sit on a shelf. She added they needed to understand the additional staffing that could be required to realistically realize the implementation, which should be part of the ideas, plans or budget request to ensure the move to implementation.

b. Review of Applications to the Task Force

Mr. de Leon reported that although the Mayor's Chief of Staff, Tony Tamayo was not available to attend the Task Force meeting, he had provided three applications for review by the Task Force including applications for Flo Wiley, a resident of Bissell Avenue; Ruthie Dineen, Executive Director, East Bay Center for the Performing Arts; and Bryan A. representing the Arts Corridor. Per City and City Clerk procedures, all applications would be funneled to the City Clerk who would review the applications and provide them to the Mayor's Office for interviews and presentations to the City Council for appointment.

When asked, Mr. de Leon was uncertain at what stage the applications were in the Mayor's review process but he could follow up. He also reported the open seats on the Task Force had been posted via a flyer on the City website, and information had been posted in the City Manager's Weekley.

Staff was asked to provide copies of the PDF file for the recruitment to Task Force members.

As to whether developers were being encouraged to make application to the Task Force, Councilmember Robinson explained the idea was to have applications from property owners, business owners, residents who lived in the area, and various stakeholders, primarily those most impacted and who may have a vision for the project area.

Mr. Whitmore noted there was a major church in the Macdonald Avenue Corridor.

8. Action Item Recap

Mr. de Leon reported future agenda items would include discussion of the presentation from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Consultant, and the walking tour.

Councilmember Robinson also asked for a discussion of the sale of the Foods Co. property to learn if the City was doing anything and whether any contact had been made, to be clear how the Task Force could be engaged or what could be done to influence that process in a more concerted way.

Mr. de Leon added another item for a future agenda would be the discussion of the RFP for the Strategic Plan Consultant.

Councilmember Robinson commented about the potential locations for housing, with the City the owner of multiple properties. If housing did not work for the 12th Street and Macdonald Avenue spot, she asked for a discussion of other opportunities and review of the lots the City owned and their locations so that everyone was clear.

Councilmember Jimenez agreed with the need to discuss not only the lots that were available but other lots that could be available, which would help with the discussion of what they really wanted and allow the Task Force to think outside the box.

Ms. Wally agreed in that the only contiguous property was located on 12th Street and Macdonald Avenue. She described a number of hop scotch properties between those properties that were blighted, abandoned, burned out and privately owned properties. Looking at that as part of the Strategic Plan was important as well. She suggested looking at the totality of everything and making the opportunity move in a Strategic Plan should be part of the analysis and job description for the consultant.

Councilmember Robinson suggested being familiar with the different places and doing some prework on the opportunities, with the City Council potentially considering other things, such as a vacancy tax or anything that could help to move people sitting on vacant or blighted properties to get involved, if warranted, but that needed to be reviewed.

Councilmember Robinson understood if the RFP was to be reviewed by the Task Force on January 27, 2026, it would also require review by the City Council and she asked about the timeline.

Ms. Beacham advised the RFP for the consultant did not require City Council approval, just the selection and recommendation.

Councilmember Robinson asked about the reasonable turnaround time to get the consultant on-board, and Ms. Beacham suggested around a four-to-six-week period.

Councilmember Robinson suggested in the interim the Task Force could get familiar with some of the known issues so it did not have to go over so much ground.

Ms. Wally suggested another walking tour and looking at properties.

Councilmember Jimenez expressed concern with the turnaround period for the consultant, but Ms. Beacham explained if limited to on-call consultants, the turnaround would be less.

Mr. de Leon suggested options could be provided at the next Task Force meeting, and could include going out to an open bid or shorten the time frame for an on-call economic analysis under community development.

Councilmember Robinson asked for the names on the on-call list that the Task Force could recommend, and Mr. de Leon advised that could be done.

Councilmember Robinson reiterated in the interim the Task Force could do some ground work and get more familiar so that it would be more informed.

9. Adjourn: 11:49 a.m.