

City of Richmond, Pogo Park awarded \$10M in Caltrans grants

March 8, 2022

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Community members gathered for a groundbreaking ceremony for the Yellow Brick Road project in the Iron Triangle in Richmond on Wednesday, June 9, 2021. (All photos by Kathy Chouteau)

By Kathy Chouteau

The City of Richmond has been awarded \$10 million in grant funding from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Clean California Local Grant Program to fund several efforts to improve city parks and roads, City officials announced today.

The program funding will allocate \$5 million to the **Richmond Communities Clean Collaborative** and nearly \$5 million to the **Yellow Brick Road: Clean, Green and Beautiful** project.

Richmond is one of 105 total grant awardees that received funding from the \$296 million available. In all, Caltrans' program received 329 applications requesting \$758.5 million in funding, said officials.

Richmond Communities Clean Collaborative (\$5 million)

Two infrastructure projects are encompassed within the Richmond Communities Clean Collaborative, namely the Boorman Park Revitalization Project—which the City says will revamp the existing park, as well as the site layout to promote safety and easy maintenance—and the 7th Street Connection Project, which involves a sidewalk and bicycle facility gap closure and installation of a plaza area with pavers and trees on 7th Street.



Boorman Park is set to be revitalized. (Photo credit: Antwon Cloird)

The Clean Collaborative also involves various projects “in the heart of the City,” per officials, including the Iron Triangle, Atchison Village, Richmore Village/Metro Square, Belding Woods, Cortez/Stege, Coronado and Santa Fe. Officials added that residents including “youth, individuals impacted by the social justice system, unhoused neighbors and other(s)” will engage in programs and partnerships such as The I Heart Richmond Campaign, which will bolster efforts to clean-up illegal dumping via dumpster days, events and deterrents; and also a partnership with nonprofit Richmond Main Street Initiative to head up the Downtown Richmond Community Greenspace Enhancement Project and Neighborhood Ambassador Program to transform the community greenspace at Harbour Way and Macdonald Avenue and eliminate litter along Macdonald Avenue.

Also afoot as part of the Clean Collaborative will be a partnership with nonprofit KIDS for the BAY on the Richmond Park and Watershed Rangers Program, which will engage local elementary school students in educational activities surrounding watershed science and trash reduction; and a partnership that will see nonprofit Rebuilding Together East Bay-North lead the Safe Organized Spaces! Richmond Program to “engage and uplift unhoused neighbors near the infrastructure projects” via training and employment for trash clean-up and other housing/personal wellness services, per officials.

Richmond Mayor Tom Butt said the Clean Collaborative echoes the paramount interests of Richmond residents in that its focus spans the gamut from “enhancing the safety of our parks and streets, to beautifying our communities through increased cleanups and greenspaces.” He expressed his gratitude to Caltrans, City staff and community partners who “worked hard to make this possible.”

Yellow Brick Road: Clean, Green and Beautiful (Almost \$5 million)

The second half of the Caltrans grant funding will enable Phase 3 of the Yellow Brick Road Project (YBR)—a.k.a. Yellow Brick Road: Clean, Green and Beautiful—in the Iron Triangle neighborhood to come to fruition, indicated officials. While Phase 1 built pedestrian-friendly street infrastructure and Phase 2 added plants and trees, Phase 3 will implement street lighting, litter abatement facilities, signage and public art on 8th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue.

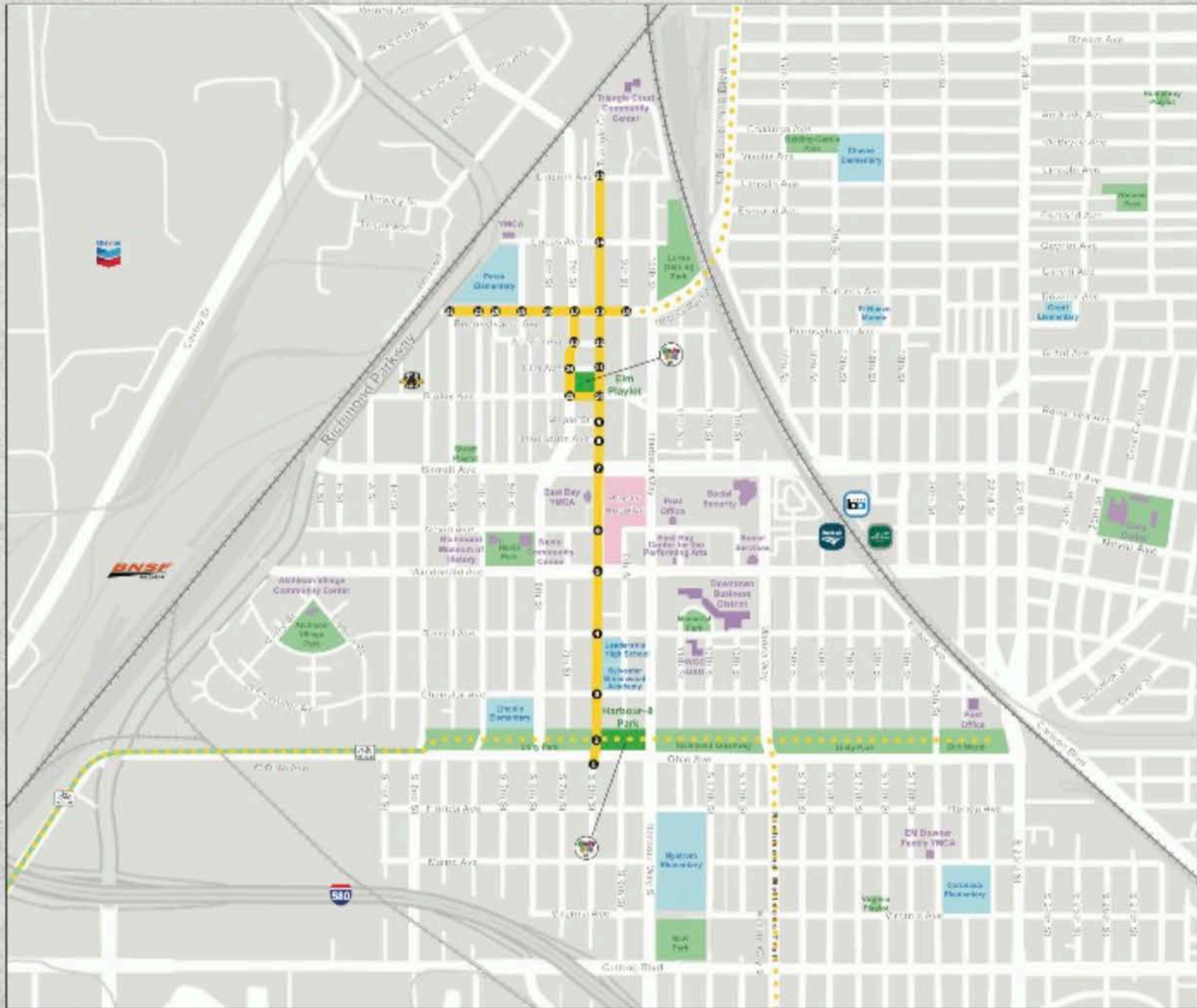
Decorative fencing at Harbour-8 Park is another project element, as is a campaign for residents living nearby the space to get involved with the litter abatement and public art efforts. Overall, the YBR project aims to “clean and beautify city streets and parks” while concurrently realizing the community’s vision “to create a clean, green and safe street for biking and walking in the Iron Triangle,” said officials.

Toody Maher, executive director of Pogo Park, called the grant a “game-changer” that will “ultimately bring the Yellow Brick Road to life.”

Officials highlight that the YBR will link numerous community assets such as Richmond’s downtown shopping district and transit connections, schools, the YMCA, Kaiser Permanente Richmond Medical Center, senior apartments, low-income housing and a historic black church. Accessible to the Iron Triangle’s 15,000 residents, the YBR route also intersects the Richmond Greenway, which connects locals to BART, Amtrak and places outside the city limits.

Interim Richmond City Manager Shasa Curl remarked that the YBR project will play “a critical role in increasing bicycle and pedestrian safety” in addition to enhancing the city’s “built environment.” She heralded the partnership among Pogo Park, city staff members and residents as helping “bring the project to fruition.”

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| 3. 8th + Chanslor | 8. 8th + Hawthorne | 13. 8th + Pennsylvania | 18. Pennsylvania + 6th | 23. 7th + Ripley |
| 4. 8th + Bissell | 9. 8th + Maple | 14. 8th + Lucas | 19. Pennsylvania + 5th | 24. 7th + Elm |
| 5. 8th + Macdonald | 10. 8th + Ripley | 15. 8th + Lincoln | 20. Pennsylvania + Turpin | 25. 7th + Acacia |