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## Groundbreaking celebrated for Yellow Brick Road project in Iron Triangle

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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**

Richmond officials joined the nonprofit [Pogo Park](#) and other stakeholders in the Iron Triangle neighborhood on Wednesday to celebrate a groundbreaking for the long-planned, youth-inspired Yellow Brick Road project, which aims to create a safe pedestrian and bike route in the neighborhood that will connect schools, parks, stores, churches and other key community places. Yellow-stenciled bricks along the route will help designate the path.

Backed by \$13 million in funding from the State of California and Caltrans, Yellow Brick Road project transformations will impact 25 intersections in the Iron Triangle, according to organizers, employing procedures to slow traffic, including extended curbs, elevated

Other project enhancements will include a “Green Street,” where a six-block area on 8<sup>th</sup> St. between Pennsylvania Ave. and Barrett Ave. will have 93 new trees to “filter the air, storm water planters to filter runoff water and 11,000 square ft. of planting to beautify a neighborhood that suffers from a critical lack of green space,” say organizers. They pointed to living wage-jobs and opportunities for local residents to develop workforce skills as other project benefits.

The project was envisioned in 2009 by neighborhood youth seeking solutions to dogged community problems—gun violence, blight and dangerous streets among them. Some of the project’s original youth visionaries, with yellow shovels in hand, performed the ceremonial groundbreaking at 8<sup>th</sup> St. and Ohio Ave. on Wednesday, while also receiving honorary gold medals for their contributions from Pogo Park. They include siblings Markel, Markeith and Ashanti Anderson, Carolyn Caldwell, Cheyenne Herbert, and Trinity Lee.



*Richmond Mayor Tom Butt speaks at Wednesday’s groundbreaking.*

“This is one of those projects that it’s not...it’s not a win. It’s not even a win-win. It’s not a win-win-win. It’s like a win-win-win-win-win-win-win,” said Richmond Mayor Tom Butt during the groundbreaking ceremony, to audience laughter. He said the project checks off many boxes by offering health benefits for people and the environment, helping to curb crime by putting more “eyes on the street” and creating safer streets shared by motorists, bicycles and pedestrians.

Once completed, the Yellow Brick Road will not only connect hyper-local community resources, but also will cast a wider net to encompass other safe-street projects, per organizers, such as San Pablo's Rumrill Boulevard Complete Streets Project, the ramp over the BART tracks at Pennsylvania Ave. and Harbour Way, and the Richmond Wellness Trail. Organizers say that linking all of these projects will ultimately create a continuous five mile bike and pedestrian path spanning from San Pablo through Richmond to the San Francisco Bay Trail.



*Pogo Park founder Toody Maher speaks at Wednesday's groundbreaking ceremony.*

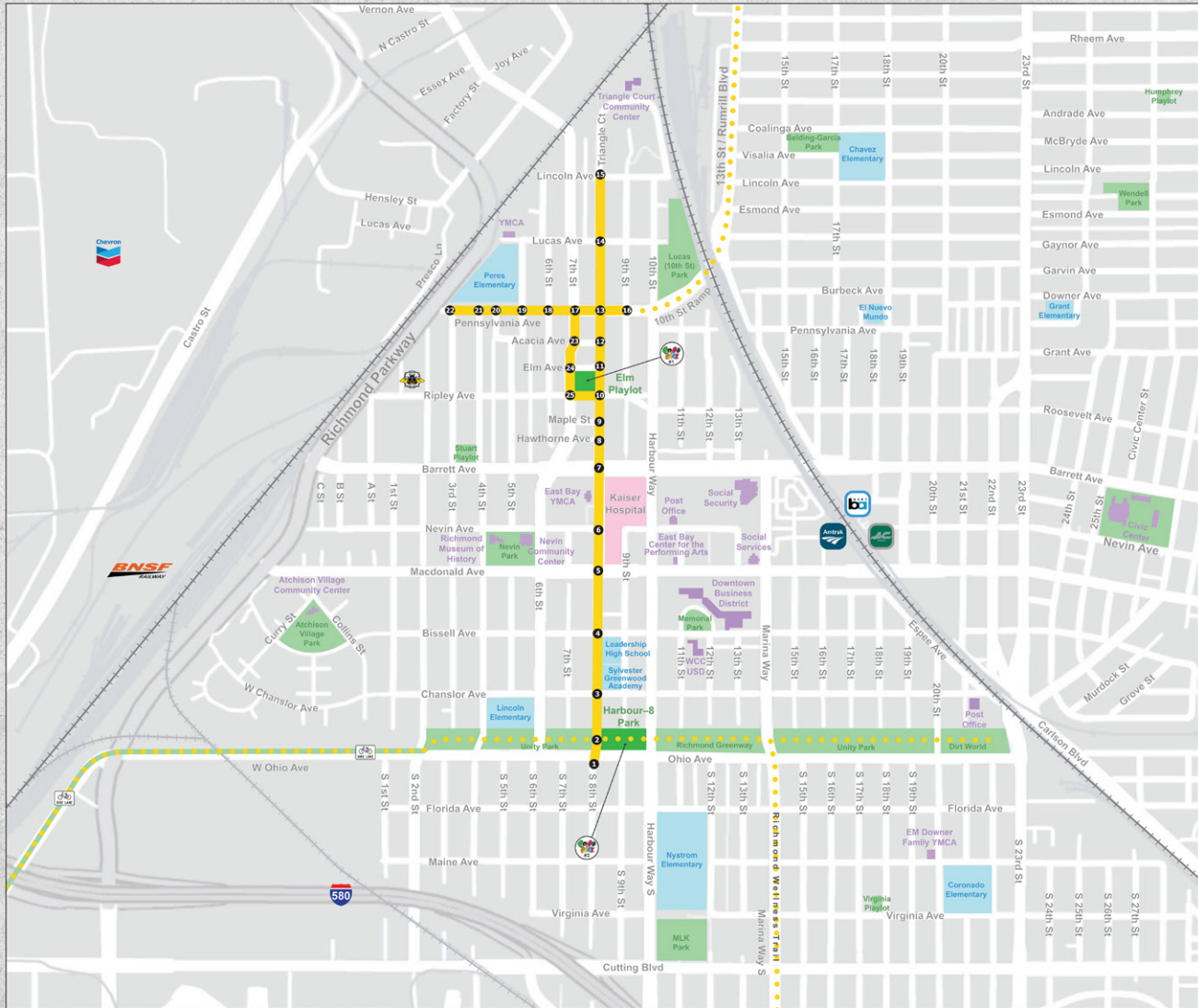
"Having a dream is easy. Anybody can have a dream and everyone has a dream each night. The hardest thing is to turn that dream into a reality," said Toody Maher, executive director of Pogo Park, who recognized the many individuals who joined them in "picking up the baton for these wonderful visionaries." Maher also underscored the contributions of her staff, some of whom "walked every single street of the Iron Triangle" each day over the course of two weeks to determine where the Yellow Brick Road would go.

Valerie Troutt, a performer from the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts perhaps best exemplified the spirit of the day with her solo "Song of Gratitude" during the event: *"Mother, father, sky and sea, we thank you for the love, for hearing our prayers and hearing our cry. Thank you for this beautiful day, for opening up this Yellow Brick Road in this green way..."*





# YELLOW BRICK ROAD®



## YELLOW BRICK ROAD® INTERSECTIONS



- |                    |                    |                        |                           |                        |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. 8th + Ohio      | 6. 8th + Nevin     | 11. 8th + Elm          | 16. Pennsylvania + 9th    | 21. Pennsylvania + 4th |
| 2. 8th + Greenway  | 7. 8th + Barrett   | 12. 8th + Acacia       | 17. Pennsylvania + 7th    | 22. Pennsylvania + 3rd |
| 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       |