

# NORTH RICHMOND | CONTEXT

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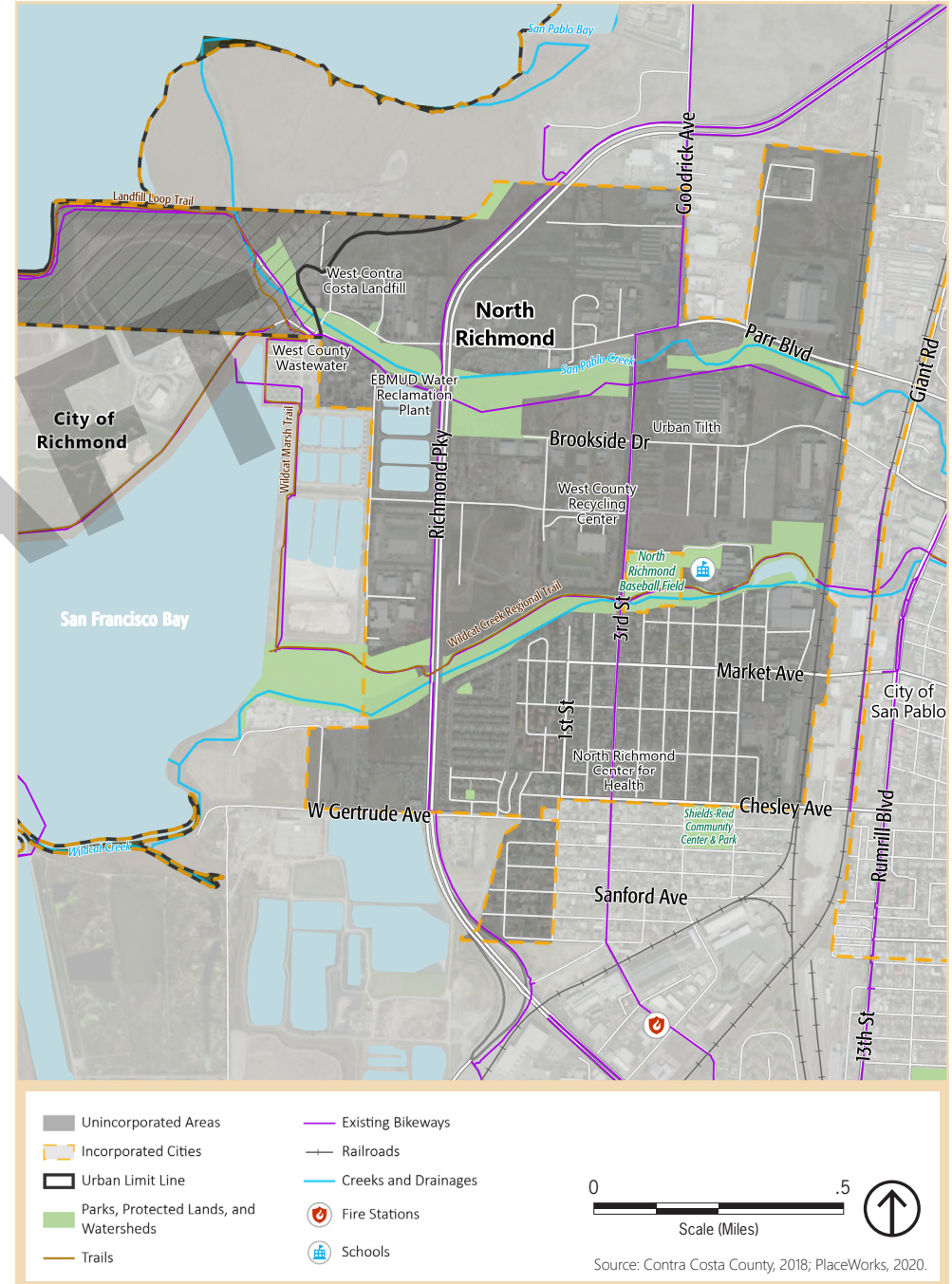
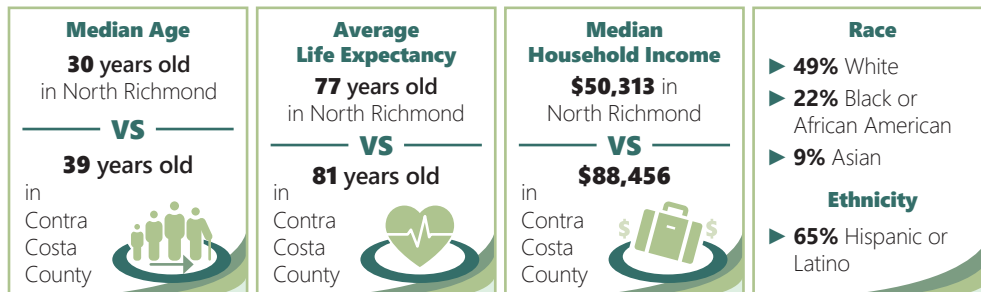


North Richmond, surrounded almost entirely by the City of Richmond, was a quiet area until the boom of World War II attracted people to the employment opportunities from the nearby Kaiser Shipyards. Due to redlining practices at the time, black and other minority workers found it challenging to identify housing options near the shipping ports and railyards, forcing them to relocate to North Richmond, which was a pocket of affordable, accessible housing for minority households, but with little neighborhood infrastructure. Following wartime, many residents stayed to work in the petroleum, railroad, and shipping industries in Richmond, and the community continued to grow.

Today, North Richmond is primarily residential south of Wildcat Creek; north of the creek, heavy industrial uses dominate. Housing is relatively affordable compared to the rest of the Bay Area, but the housing stock is aging and many households face high housing cost burdens and poor infrastructure. These factors, combined with North Richmond's proximity to job centers and its position on the Interstate 80 corridor, place it at risk of gentrification and displacement of existing residents, many of whom are renters. There are no affordable housing complexes in the community, and while the County offers housing choice vouchers to eligible applicants for use in North Richmond, residents would like more affordable housing incorporated into new development. There is a strong and growing urban farming movement that has transformed vacant lots into community gardens, improving access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food.

North Richmond residents are actively engaged in the local planning process and advocate for their community through Urban Tilth, the Verde Elementary School, the Watershed Project, and other neighborhood organizations, but planning is complicated due to the large portion of the neighborhood divided across the City of Richmond's boundaries. Given their close proximity to heavy industrial uses, including the Chevron Richmond Refinery, residents are very concerned about community health, along with other issues like crime and illegal dumping. There are regulations in place that mitigate emissions from new industrial users, and the community is working with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) to develop an action framework for community air protection, given North Richmond's status as a Community of Concern. In addition, while there have been recent levee improvements and streetscape and sidewalk improvements, community members would like additional roadway infrastructure and transit improvements that ensure safe, equitable, and affordable transportation access for all modes.

## WHO LIVES IN NORTH RICHMOND?









Source: Contra Costa County, 2018; PlaceWorks, 2020.



The information on this page presents a summary of hazards and vulnerabilities in the North Richmond community based on the Contra Costa County Vulnerability Assessment; please see the [online Vulnerability Assessment](#) for a full description of these hazards and vulnerabilities.

## Hazards

-  Air quality from increased ozone and diesel particulate matter
-  Coastal flooding
-  Extreme heat
-  Flooding
-  Human health hazards
-  Seismic hazards

## Major Vulnerabilities

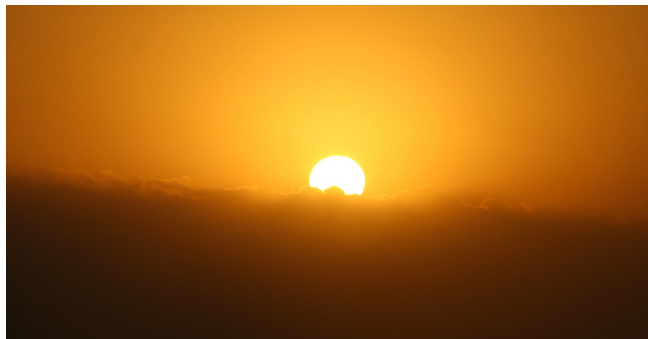
Cost-burdened households and households in poverty are vulnerable to coastal flooding and seismic hazards.

Persons experiencing chronic illnesses, homeless persons, and households in poverty are vulnerable to air quality, extreme heat, and human health hazards.

Levees located in North Richmond are vulnerable to coastal flooding.

The recycling center in North Richmond is vulnerable to coastal flooding.

Public transit access, water and wastewater services, energy delivery services, and solid waste removal services are vulnerable to multiple hazards.



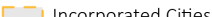



These images represent hazards to which North Richmond is vulnerable, including earthquakes, flooding, and extreme heat.

## FLOOD ZONES



### Flood Hazard Areas

-  100-Year Flood Zone
-  500-Year Flood Zone
-  Areas of Undetermined but Possible Flood Hazard
-  Water
-  Unincorporated Areas
-  Incorporated Cities
-  Urban Limit Line
-  Outside Urban Limit Line
-  Railroads
-  Creeks and Drainages

A 100-year flood zone represents a 1% chance of flooding in any given year.  
A 500-year flood zone represents a 0.2% chance of flooding in any given year.



## DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITY

The County has identified North Richmond as a disadvantaged community under Senate Bill (SB) 1000, which requires the County to integrate environmental justice into the General Plan. This law is based on the understanding that some communities have experienced a combination of historic discrimination, negligence, and political and economic disempowerment. Often, this has resulted in a disproportionate burden of pollution and health impacts and disproportionate social and economic disadvantages in these communities.

The 20 indicators that contribute to North Richmond's identification as a disadvantaged community are highlighted in the chart to the right, with additional details provided in the maps that follow, based on State data from [CalEnviroScreen](#). The chart shows how North Richmond ranks for each indicator compared to the rest of the state. The State identifies disadvantaged communities as those where the combined ranking for all factors is 75 percent or higher.

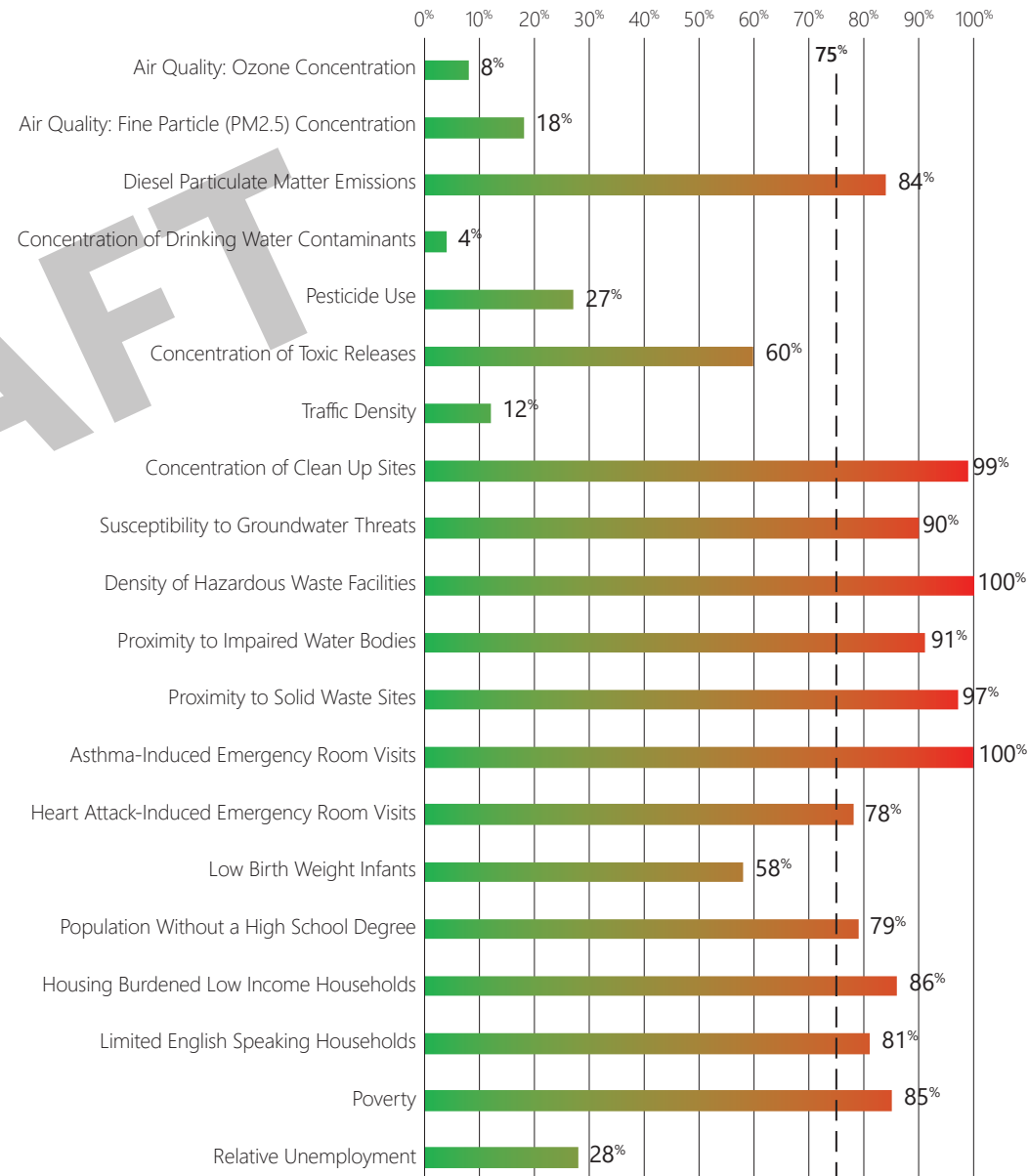
North Richmond experiences high levels of diesel particulate matter due to the oil refinery, chemical companies, highways, rail yards, shipping ports, and marine terminals located within and near the community. Exposure to these chemicals causes eye, throat, and nose irritation, along with heart and lung disease. As shown in the chart, North Richmond residents visit the emergency room for asthma conditions at a rate that is among the highest rate in the state. There are frequent violations of air quality rules from facilities in and around North Richmond, and air testing has found unsafe levels of industrial pollutants inside residents' homes.

There are also many hazardous waste facilities and generators that affect North Richmond, including the Chevron Refinery, chemical companies, and Superfund sites. Beyond the acute risks to human and environmental health, these sources also raise concerns about odors, vermin, and increased freight traffic.

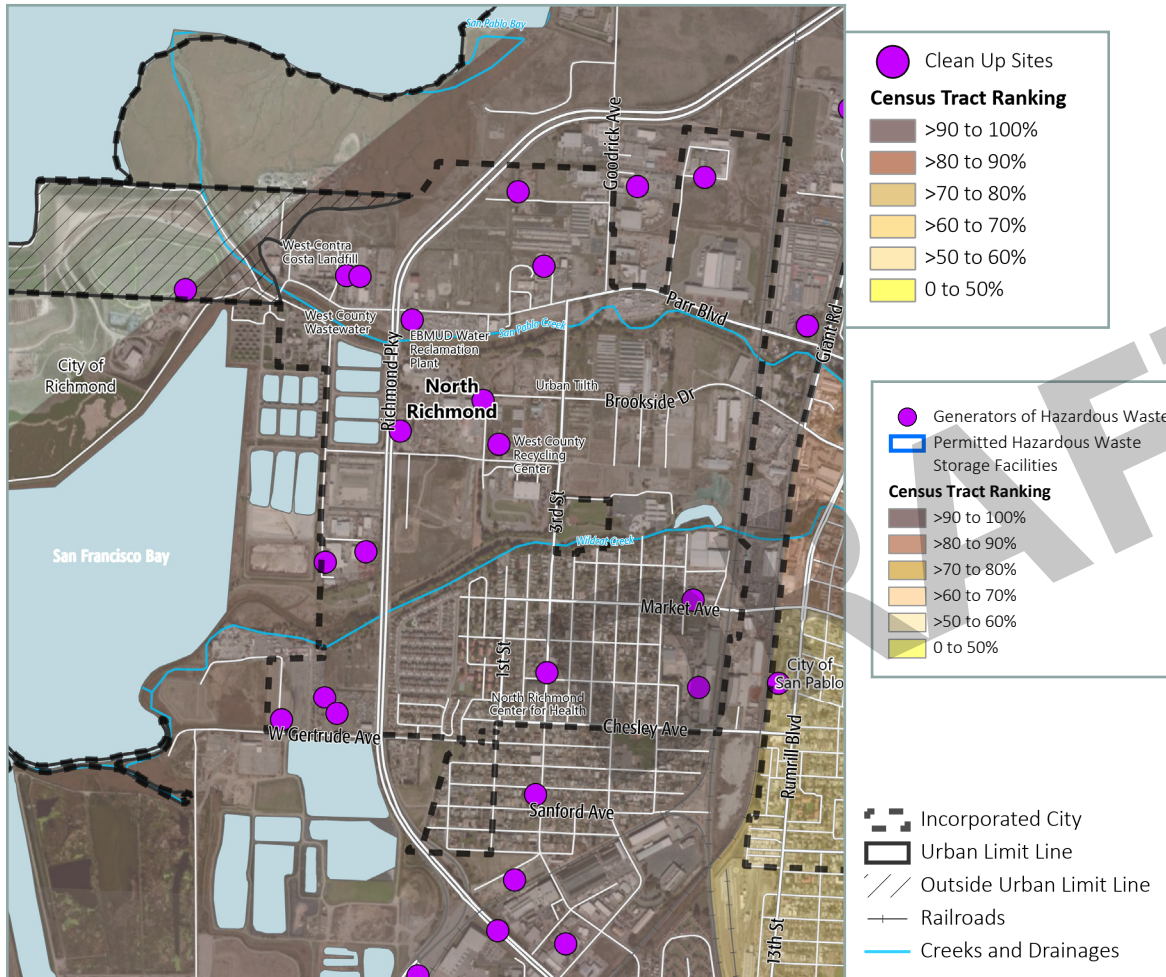
The community also is burdened by a high rate of crime, having one of the highest per-capita homicide rates in the nation. In addition to safety concerns, outdoor recreation and active transportation is also hampered by a lack of maintenance of existing trails and the need for more connected walking and biking infrastructure. Limited access to active recreation and transportation, coupled with limited access to stores that sell fresh and healthy food, can lead to poor health outcomes for local residents. However, a strong and growing urban agriculture movement is helping to bring healthy food options to North Richmond.

## DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITY INDICATORS (2017)

### Ranking of North Richmond Census Tract Relative to the State







## CLEAN UP SITES

This map ranks Census tracts based on the concentration of clean up sites, which are sites undergoing clean up actions by governmental authorities or property owners due to environmental degradation from hazardous substances. The ranking also considers the nature and magnitude of the threat and the site type and status. The North Richmond Census tract is ranked at 99 percent, meaning that the area has a concentration of clean up sites that is higher than 99 percent of the state. In addition, some of the clean up sites in North Richmond are within the 100 year and 500 year flood zones (see map on page 2), posing risk of further contamination during a flood event.



## HAZARDOUS WASTE

This map ranks Census tracts based on the density of hazardous waste facilities and generators (e.g., the Chevron Refinery), considering each facility's type and permit status and generator activities. The North Richmond Census tract is ranked at 100 percent, meaning that it has a density of hazardous waste facilities and generators that is among the highest in the state.







## SOLID WASTE

This map ranks Census tracts based on the proximity to solid waste sites and facilities, considering each facility's type, proximity to nearby communities, reported odor complaints, and more. The North Richmond Census tract is ranked at 97 percent, meaning that the area is more exposed to solid waste hazards than 97 percent of the state.

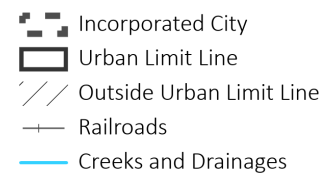
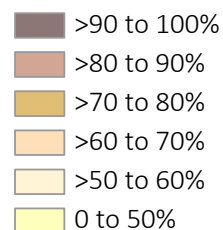


Source: CalEnviroScreen, 2018; Contra Costa County, 2018; PlaceWorks, 2020.



● Solid Waste Facilities

### Census Tract Ranking





## PLANNED LAND USE

Land use designations for North Richmond are shown on the Land Use Map and defined in the Land Use Element. The area south of Wildcat Creek is the heart of the community. In that area, land use designations plan for the continuation of residential uses at a range of densities supported by local-serving commercial development. The Mixed Use designations along Fred Jackson Way and Chesley Avenue envision a combination of affordable, multi-family residential units and ground-level retail and office uses.

North of Wildcat Creek and along the railroad tracks, there is extensive existing industrial development, which is supported by the Light Industrial designation. Land use designations also reflect existing public uses, including Verde Elementary School, East Bay Municipal Utility District water treatment facility, and the West Contra Costa Landfill.

The North Richmond Design Guidelines provide more detailed design guidance for development in this area.



Office use in North Richmond.



Multi-family senior housing in North Richmond.



Small lot single-family housing in North Richmond.



Public facilities celebrating community culture in North Richmond.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In 2019, Healthy Richmond published the Quality of Life (QOL) Plan, which was developed with robust community engagement and under the direction of the North Richmond Leadership Team, a group of North Richmond residents dedicated to organizing and voicing the aspirations and concerns of the North Richmond community. The QOL Plan informed the creation of guiding principles, policies, and actions in this community profile; references to specific QOL Plan priorities are noted in parentheses at the end of relevant policies and actions.

The following guiding principles articulate the values, priorities, and aspirations for the future shared by North Richmond community members:

1. Affordable rental and ownership housing opportunities in North Richmond should be expanded and integrated into market rate developments. A range of housing types should be available to meet extremely low, very low, and low income levels, and existing North Richmond community members should be prioritized for available housing.
2. Achievement of housing development goals should be balanced with maintaining quality of life, parking availability, circulation, and property values for current residents.
3. North Richmond residents who lack housing should have access to quality services and be treated with dignity and respect. Vital, easy-to-access community programs related to homelessness, rehabilitation, education and training, youth, and elderly services should be available.
4. Sensitive uses, like schools and senior housing, should be buffered from heavy industrial uses.
5. Industrial uses in and around North Richmond should transition to renewable energy and other clean industries that do not pose health risks to the neighborhood.
6. North Richmond residents should have better access to Wildcat Creek, the bay shore, and other parks and green spaces. Students at Verde Elementary should be able to access open spaces via a safe and connected trail network.
7. North Richmond should provide a healthy and safe environment, where vacant lots have transitioned into vibrant community assets like community gardens.
8. Streets in North Richmond should be more inviting, including by repairing and adding sidewalks, increasing street lighting, planting trees, improving parking, and eliminating illegal dumping. Public infrastructure, including green infrastructure, should be upgraded and well-maintained, and the design of the built environment should contribute to crime prevention.
9. North Richmond should be a safe place for people of all abilities to walk, bike, and drive. Speeding and cut-through traffic should be eliminated, impacts from truck traffic should be mitigated, and railway crossings should be separated from the roadway.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES (CONTINUED)

- 10.** North Richmond residents should have access to affordable and reliable public transportation with more frequent bus connections to the BART station and bus stops that provide amenities to increase safety and comfort, such as shelters, benches, lighting, and landscaping.
- 11.** North Richmond residents should enjoy easy access to affordable, healthy, and fresh food, including grocery stores, farmers markets, and community gardens.
- 12.** New mixed use and commercial development that works with and benefits residents should be encouraged in North Richmond. The local economy should offer diverse employment opportunities that promote social mobility and the self-sufficiency of the community.

## POLICIES

- 1.** The maximum allowed density and intensity of development in the Mixed Use designation is X units per net acre and Y floor area ratio (FAR).
- 2.** Coordinate with the West Contra Costa Unified School District, the City of Richmond, and local residents, including youth to enhance existing open spaces, including Shields-Reid Park, Verde Elementary School, and Lucky A's Field, to provide the fullest civic, educational, social, and recreational benefits for the community. (QOL I.3)
- 3.** Work with the West Contra Costa Unified School District to secure permanent funding for afterschool programs in North Richmond.
- 4.** Coordinate with local non-profits to celebrate the history of diversity in North Richmond, such as through community events and public art.
- 5.** Prohibit the construction of large walls or gates that divide the community. (QOL Y.4)
- 6.** Require that new industrial development pay special attention to upgrading the visual appearance and unity of the area through quality architectural and landscape design and utility undergrounding. (3-188)
- 7.** Continue to monitor air quality through air monitoring sensors installed throughout the community as part of the Community Air Protection Program (Assembly Bill 617).
- 8.** Require that new development in North Richmond incorporate green infrastructure solutions to minimize flooding and environmental pollution, such as bioswales, detention or retention ponds, and cisterns that capture rainwater for irrigation. (QOL I.7)
- 9.** Promote the use of native plants in green infrastructure, landscaping, and parks.

## POLICIES (CONTINUED)

- 10.** Require that new private and public development, including roadway projects, incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles of access control (such as appropriately located doors and fences), visibility (such as adequate lighting, windows that look onto public and private spaces, landscaping that does not offer hiding places), clear boundaries between public spaces and private spaces (through signage, sidewalks, or other visual cues) and maintenance. (QOL I.1)
- 11.** Support workforce development and wealth-building programs for local residents and locally owned businesses, cooperatives, and other uses offering benefits to the community, such as a grocery store or community kitchen. (QOL B.1)
- 12.** Foster partnerships, including with the West Contra Costa Unified School District, to expand the continuing education opportunities for adults in North Richmond, targeting the area around Verde Elementary School.
- 13.** Seek community benefit agreements for large businesses in North Richmond. Such agreements could include requirements for local hiring, apprenticeship and training programs, and funding for school and education programs. (QOL H.4, B.3)
- 14.** Continue to support the vibrant urban agriculture operations in North Richmond. (3-194)

## ACTIONS

- 1.** Seek funding to construct a new community center in North Richmond that serves youth and families, and support programming that promotes employment opportunities and workforce development. (QOL Y.3, I.5, I.6)
- 2.** Assign a new seat on the North Richmond Municipal Advisory Council for a youth representative, and work with local schools and other youth organizations to find youth representatives. (QOL Y.2)
- 3.** Seek funding for and partner with landlords or property owners to house homeless families.
- 4.** Seek Opportunity Zone funding or support community advocacy for a social impact bond, with non-profit governance, to develop funds for renovation of North Richmond homes by the local labor force.
- 5.** Amend the Zoning Code to streamline permitting on vacant lots when proposed development includes an affordable housing component.

## POLICIES (CONTINUED)

6. Restore creeks with native plants, including planting an urban forest at the eastern end of Wildcat Creek, and develop new amenities, connections, and access points along Wildcat Creek. Consider partnering with local non-profit organizations to maintain vegetation along the creek.
7. Prepare an urban greening plan for North Richmond that would include a quantitative canopy target.
8. Develop an action plan to reduce air pollution and exposure in the North Richmond community.
9. Construct trail connections to the Bay Trail and to residential areas, including the residential areas adjacent to Wildcat Creek, and install amenities like wayfinding, educational signs, bathrooms, water fountains, and benches.
10. Seek funding for and conduct a community-led process to complete the Wildcat Creek Trail crossing to the marsh with a multi-use trail over Richmond Parkway.
11. Install and monitor security cameras in areas where illegal dumping is common.
12. Prepare and implement a street corridor and gateway beautification plan that celebrates the unique historical identity of North Richmond and instills civic pride and a sense of unity among residents. (QOL B.6)
13. Update the North Richmond Specific Plan to encompass the entire North Richmond community and integrate goals and concepts from recent planning efforts, including the 2019 Quality of Life Plan launched by the North Richmond community and the 2018 Priority Resilience Plan developed as part of the Bay Area Resilient by Design Challenge. (QOL I.8)
14. Expand the area covered by the Safe Routes to School program for Verde Elementary to provide safe connections between the school and offsite afterschool programs.
15. Develop a plan for equitable access to active transportation and to address speeding, dangerous intersections, and cut-through traffic on 1st Street and Richmond Parkway. (QOL S.1)
16. Install pedestrian and bicycle improvements to increase safety and comfort along Fred Jackson Way.
17. Designate truck routes in and to North Richmond that minimize impacts on schools and homes.
18. Study possible incentives to encourage local residents to open businesses in North Richmond, such as property tax rebates, sales tax rebates, and breaks on other taxes and fees that the County controls, and adopt the most effective incentives.