



Richmond Main Street Initiative (RMSI) is dedicated to revitalizing Downtown Richmond as a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly urban village offering products, services, arts, and entertainment that reflects the community's rich and diverse heritage.

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# HEARD ON MAIN STREET

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## Macdonald Avenue: Small Changes Making a Big Difference

Macdonald Avenue—Richmond's historic "Main Street"—is undergoing a magnificent transformation. From streetscape maintenance to new businesses, these changes are moving Downtown in the right direction. In March 2014, Safety1st community liaisons power-washed sidewalks, benches, and bus stops along Macdonald Avenue. Property owners and new tenants also played a big role in improving the appearance of Downtown. A new coat of paint on the outside of 310 9th Street added a pop of color, while new windows at 912 Macdonald Avenue updated the façade of the old Milen's building. SparkPoint Contra Costa, Platinum Haircuts, and R-Transit all moved into vacant spaces located along this busy street in 2014, bringing crucial services and attracting visitors.

## Chicken & Waffles Finds New Home at Richmond BART



After nearly a year of negotiations, Home of Chicken and Waffles signed a long-term lease for the retail space at the BART parking garage in November. "We are so excited to welcome Chicken & Waffles to Downtown", beamed Executive Director Amanda Elliott. Beginning in late 2013, Elliott began meeting with Derreck Johnson, owner of Home of Chicken and Waffles, to identify a location in Downtown. When he chose the

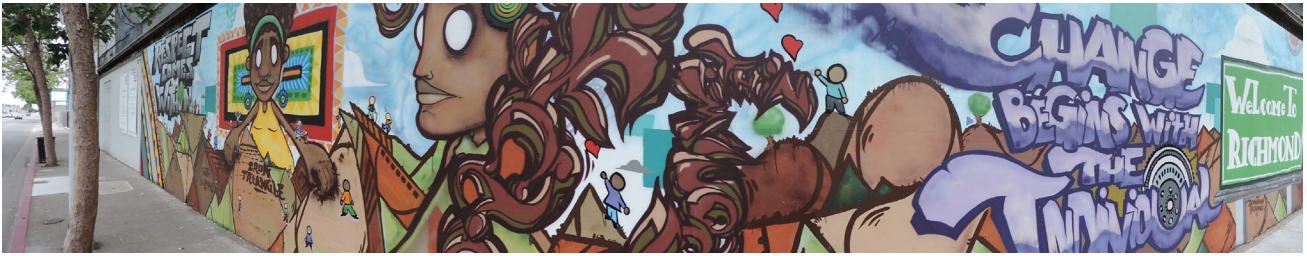
BART space, Elliott drew on her strong community ties to facilitate meetings with representatives from the city of Richmond and BART. Elliott also played a large role in advocating for the business deal, which will help realize the vision of a vibrant downtown by developing the 10,000 square foot space into a destination for food lovers: in addition to the restaurant, current plans for the space include a coffee shop and café—businesses that will fulfill the community's most requested wishes—and serve as a catalyst for additional investments. RMSI continues to support this endeavor through a campaign on the popular crowdfunding website, Indiegogo. More information about the campaign is available at [www.richmondmainstreet.org](http://www.richmondmainstreet.org).

## East Bay Bargains Reborn

Thanks to a new owner with strong ties to the community, 1500 Macdonald Avenue—once the home of East Bay Bargains—is home to three new tenants. The first business to move in was Rich City Rides Community Bike Shop, which opened its doors in late July. The Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center and a car enthusiast in need of a workshop space quickly followed. Now the building is a hub of activity, learning, and craftsmanship.



# Art is Alive & Free in Downtown



*Art draws people to places. Positive images can evoke positive thoughts. The Alive & Free mural is a perfect example of this philosophy.*

On May 8, 2014, RMSI continued its commitment to foster the arts in the revitalization of Downtown by sponsoring Alive and Free: Murals on Macdonald, a special event to celebrate and dedicate the district's newest public art piece—*Alive & Free*. Over 100 people gathered in the Community Green Space park to get a good look at the mural, which is located on the southwest corner of Macdonald Avenue and Harbour Way.

The culmination of a two-year collaboration between Richmond-based artist Richard Muro Salazar and the Omega Boy Club's Alive & Free violence prevention program, the mural features vibrant colors, dynamic figures, and positive messages. Funding from The California Endowment and a mini-grant awarded by the City of Richmond Arts and Culture Commission, and support from community members were also instrumental in Salazar's ability to realize his artistic vision. Inspired by his desire to create something that would memorialize a friend, Salazar's design promotes a safer Richmond and serves as a hub for fostering positivity.

Additionally, the mural acts as an important revitalization tool: "The arts play a vital role in active urban community life. They attract residents and visitors, which in turn increases business opportunities and economic development," says Amanda Elliott.

## SYEP Super Star

The 2014 Summer Youth Entrepreneur Program (SYEP) trained and employed 15 youth, many of whom gained hands-on work experience at T.J.Maxx in Pinole.



Eight of the workers were hired in temporary positions, and one participant, Malaya Harris, was offered a permanent position. Harris credits SYEP with encouraging her to present herself with "the best image", always give 100%, and to not be afraid to make mistakes because "when you learn from them, you may not notice it yourself, but everyone else will see that you're a dedicated worker and that becomes more admirable every day." Harris is currently enrolled at Contra Costa College and aspires to fulfill her dream career as an animator.

## Downtown Updates



**10 new businesses opened in 2014.** Our new neighbors include retail stores, nonprofit organizations, and a barber shop. **Catholic Charities of the East Bay** opened the doors to its newly renovated West County Service Center (217 Harbour Way). Spacious classrooms, counseling services, and art from NIAD Art Center are just some of the amenities available. **Tarabini's Deli is now under new management**, which has made updates to the décor but continues to serve the same great menu.

On April 26, **volunteers from the Bay Area Rescue Mission helped spruce up the Community Green Space park** by pulling weeds, removing litter, and planting flowers. **Market Square Mall added new businesses to its directory**, which now includes The Law Office of Veronica B. Granillo, Jaded Peach Lingerie, and Angel's Thrift Shop. **Property owners and tenants invested in Downtown** by making improvements valued at over \$12 million.





## Downtown is Where it's At!



### Community Celebrations Abound in 2014

RMSI furthered efforts to support health and wellness in Downtown by continuing its sponsorship of the Richmond Main Street Farmers' Market, Healthy Village Farm Stand events, and fitness classes. Attendance at the farmers' market rose to 13,000 throughout the season, which was extended by two weeks! From May 6-November 12, Downtown residents and workers flocked to the Nevin Plaza every Wednesday to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, listen to live music, purchase artisanal goods, and enjoy gourmet goodies.

With support from 20 community partners each of the four Healthy Village Farm Stand events featured a different theme. The impact was phenomenal: the events served 700+ guests and distributed 600 healthy food samples, 320 bags of fresh produce, and 200+ books. 75% of participants surveyed said they would use the resources and information to buy and eat more fresh produce. In January, the fitness class schedule expanded to include martial arts for children and adults. Attendance grew quickly, ultimately serving 106 children throughout the year. Fitness classes for adults included Zumba and Bellydance for Wellness. In total 167 classes provided free physical fitness to 3087 individuals!

Summertime in Downtown would not be complete without the Music on the Main concerts—and the 2014 series did not disappoint! Spectacular performances by headliners Rhonda Benin and Andre Thierry & Zydeco Magic brought everyone to the dance floor. The two concerts also featured 24 artisan, food, and information booths, fresh produce giveaways, free bike parking, and fitness breaks.

In September the 6th annual Spirit & Soul Festival attracted over 1000 people to Macdonald Avenue, many of whom danced in celebration of Downtown...especially when Dahrio Wonder—accompanied by Zumba fitness star Gina Grant—took to the stage. Throughout the day guests enjoyed shopping, sipping, and dining their way through the outdoor bazaar. James Goins, David Thompson, Captain Mark Gagan, and William Casey were honored as Downtown Champions.

In partnership with the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts, RMSI welcomed over 400 children to the annual Downtown Holiday Festival in December. Families enjoyed an evening filled with joyous activities: light refreshments, multi-cultural entertainment, visits with Santa, group caroling, and the ceremonial illumination of holiday lights on Macdonald Avenue.



### Supporting Entrepreneurs, Building the Local Economy



RMSI continued its commitment to fostering economic development and supporting entrepreneurs in 2014 by sponsoring 8 small business workshops. In partnership with the Contra Costa SBDC, RMSI provided 60 entrepreneurs with the resources essential to establishing and running a successful business—all free of charge. One participant—Najari Smith—opened his business, Rich City Rides Community Bike Shop, in the heart of Downtown after completing the NxLevel Business Planning workshop.

Over 65 businesses also benefitted from Richmond Business Bites—a new program designed to provide insight and best-practices on a range of specialized topics. Each of the 3 lunchtime workshops featured a panel of experts and valuable networking opportunities.

# Message from the Executive Director

Every day we discover new and exciting projects that connect us to our past and propel us toward the future. Now is no different. We are embarking upon an exciting new path that will make monumental changes in our community. As a member of UC Berkeley's Working Group for the Berkeley Global Campus at Richmond Bay, I have the unique opportunity to be part of a team that will make recommendations to the Chancellor about this historic project that is one of the most important economic development ventures in the City of Richmond since WWII. As a working group member, I am advocating for jobs, contracts for Richmond small businesses, and investment in our community to educate our youth and prepare them for jobs at this global institution and the new economy.



Amanda Elliott  
Executive Director

It is imperative that we work to increase the capacity of our small, micro, and cooperative businesses in Richmond. Through training and education, Richmond businesses will have the tools to scale-up their enterprises in order to successfully compete for contracts at the campus and hire locally. Our community needs support from commercial corridor efforts like Richmond Main Street in order to create economic opportunities and attract businesses to our historic Downtown district.

In the past year, we were successful in our efforts to facilitate negotiations between BART and Home of Chicken and Waffles to secure a long-term lease of the BART retail space on Macdonald Avenue. As we continue to build on the vision of a vibrant downtown, Richmond Main Street has embraced this opportunity to further support the development of a food-destination project by raising funds through an Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign. We are encouraged by the early support from the community for this project, which we expect to be the catalyst for more robust economic development investments.

Richmond Main Street is leading the way forward and strengthening our foundation. We are on a path toward success, creating a thriving commercial district that honors our rich history and celebrates our bright future. Join us!

Warm regards,

  
Amanda Elliott

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## Our Staff

Amanda Elliott, Executive Director  
Alicia Gallo, Outreach Coordinator  
Shawnie Bennett, Administrative/Finance Coordinator  
Vaneese Johnson, Small Business Consultant

## Our Volunteers: the HEART of Main Street

Richmond Main Street acknowledges and thanks all of the wonderful individuals who donate their time and skills to making our events and programs successful. You are the heart and soul of Downtown and we are forever grateful for your dedication to the revitalization of Historic Main Street.

THANK YOU!!!



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Join the efforts to Revitalize Downtown

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