



AGENDA REPORT

City Council

DATE:	January 7, 2025
TO:	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
FROM:	Councilmember Soheila Bana
Subject:	Equitable Allocation of Funding and Mailing Services for All Neighborhoods
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	The City of Richmond was awarded a \$750,000 grant from the State of California, The City of Richmond provided neighborhoods with a Neighborhood Council \$15,000 to support community-building activities.
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	None
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	To ensure that all Richmond neighborhoods have equitable access to city supported funding for mailing services that support community building and improvement efforts utilizing.
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	DIRECT staff to develop a framework for a program that allocates funding and city-supported mailing services to all neighborhoods, regardless of whether they have a recognized Neighborhood Council, Homeowners Association, or neither, to support community-building activities and neighborhood improvements – Councilmember Soheila Bana (510-620- 6473). This item was continued from the November 26, 2024, meeting.

DISCUSSION:

The City of Richmond was awarded a \$750,000 grant from the State of California, Governor's Office of Planning and Research, for Local Government: Connecting Neighbor to Neighbors (Neighbor-to-Neighbor). The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the impact and value of strong, local networks in uplifting community resilience and protecting our most vulnerable populations from the impacts of crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the impact and value of strong, local networks in uplifting community resilience and protecting our most vulnerable populations from the impacts of crisis. Cut off from brick-and-mortar institutions and the services they provided during this time, individuals and families relied more heavily on their local networks, especially neighbors; research from past disasters and emergencies show that neighborhoods with strong ties can overcome these challenges more effectively.

To increase the strength and prevalence of social ties after the pandemic, California Volunteers committed to supporting local neighborhood initiatives that promote resilience and reinforce social connection through the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program.

While Neighbor-to-Neighbor aims to mitigate community isolation, increase volunteer participation, and improve social connectedness in neighborhoods. The City of Richmond provided neighborhoods with a Neighborhood Council \$15,000 to support community-building activities. Neighborhoods without a Neighborhood Council or that are a part of a Homeowner's Association were not able to receive this funding.

Richmond has a total 41 neighborhoods, only 20 of them have a Neighborhood Council. Through the grant program, the City of Richmond will partner with the Richmond Neighborhood Coordinating Council to engage 20 neighborhood councils to do the following:

- Neighborhood surveys and workshops to set priorities and plan projects within the grant scope.
- Host a kickoff in each neighborhood.
- Complete over 80 projects and events. Through the grant, the eligible projects will include:
 - Community engagement events, such as a large-scale public workshop or back-to-school fair, that are focused on neighborhood support and recognition.
 - Climate action or disaster preparedness activities, such as tree planting or home hardening.
 - Local volunteer opportunities, such as community garden work, food distribution, or a neighborhood clean-up that leverages parks and community facilities.

- Training opportunities addressing environmental or resiliency issues specific to the neighborhood, such as earthquake preparedness, wildfire response, and first aid/CPR.
- Other events may be eligible.
- Complete a final neighborhood survey/case study.

Recently, a resident organized a community gathering to strengthen their neighborhood but had to raise \$1,500 through GoFundMe to cover expenses, including the printing and door-to-door distribution of flyers. This specific neighborhood does not have a Neighborhood Council and they were not able to benefit from the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program offering financial support for community-building activities.

To ensure that all neighborhoods have equal access to city support, the following is proposed:

- 1 **Funding for All Neighborhoods:** Establish a fund accessible to all neighborhoods, regardless of organizational structure, for community-building events, beautification efforts, safety improvements, and other neighborhood enhancement initiatives.
- 2 **Mailing Services for Flyers:** Extend city-supported flyer mailing services to all neighborhoods, similar to the existing service for NCs, to ensure outreach and communication about neighborhood events.
- 3 **Approval-Based Fund Distribution:** Direct staff to design a process where community advocates in each neighborhood can apply for funds by collecting 10 signatures from neighbors approving the event and the associated expenses.
- 4 **Transparency and Accountability:** Implement a reporting mechanism for event organizers to ensure transparency and accountability in the use of city-provided funds.

All neighborhoods in Richmond, whether they have a Neighborhood Council, Homeowner's Association, or neither, deserve equitable access to city resources that support community building and improvement efforts. Providing funding and mailing services to all neighborhoods will foster inclusivity and ensure that all residents benefit from the city's services.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

ATTACHMENT- Resolution