



AGENDA REPORT

Economic Development

DATE:	January 7, 2025
TO:	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
FROM:	Nannette Beacham, Director of Economic Development Lizeht Zepeda, Senior Business Assistance Officer Kyle Lam, Management Analyst
Subject:	Contract with Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center to Administer the Small Business Building Beautification Pilot Program.
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	The proposed \$340,000 expenditure is included within Economic Development's approved fiscal year 2024 – 2025 budget (Account String – 01361165 – 400201–16G23)
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	June 21, 2022
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	The Economic Development Department is seeking approval of the contract with Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center to provide technical assistance and administration of the Small Business Building Beautification Pilot Program.
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	APPROVE a contract with Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center for small business assistance in an amount not to exceed \$340,000, with a term beginning on January 7, 2025, and ending on December 31, 2026 – Economic Development Department (Nannette Beacham 510-621-1306/Lizeht Zepeda 510-620-6653/Kyle Lam 510-620-6802).

DISCUSSION:

Background

On October 27, 2022, the California Strategic Growth Council awarded the City of Richmond a \$35 million Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) Round 4 Implementation Grant, launching the Richmond Rising initiative. This community-led effort focuses on improving the City's environmental, economic, and social conditions, with an emphasis on the Iron Triangle, Santa Fe, and Coronado neighborhoods (Richmond Rising area).

A core element of the Richmond Rising initiative is the Displacement Avoidance Plan, which integrates policies and programs designed to prevent displacement by fostering opportunities for residents and businesses to thrive within these communities to ensure long-term residency and business presence in the area. A key element of this plan is the Small Business Building Beautification Program, a strategic effort focused on supporting small businesses in making improvements to their commercial properties, fostering enhanced community pride, economic resilience, and improved marketability of properties and businesses within Richmond.

Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

On August 14, 2024, the City of Richmond released an RFQ to solicit proposals from qualified providers to administer the Small Business Building Beautification Program. This program seeks to support small businesses by encouraging and facilitating enhancements to commercial building facades and interior spaces. The City has identified that such improvements can substantially impact the aesthetics, sense of community pride, economic vitality, and marketability of Richmond's commercial properties. Proposals in response to the RFQ were initially due on September 4, 2024, but due to receiving no submissions by the initial deadline, the RFQ was reissued on September 26, 2024, with a revised due date of October 10, 2024, ultimately yielding two proposals.

The RFQ outlined specific goals, including building the capacity of small businesses in the community, particularly those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, to improve the physical appearance of their properties. Recognizing the diversity within the community, the RFQ also stipulated those services be provided in multiple languages as needed, ensuring accessibility for all business owners.

The following key activities were sought through the RFQ, and applicants were permitted to specialize in one or more of these areas:

- Building Beautification Program Administration
 - Management of grant and reimbursement processes
 - Information reporting and documentation
 - Intake, verification, and processing of applications

Selection Process and Evaluation Criteria

The City received two proposals from qualified service providers in response to the reissued RFQ. An evaluation committee, consisting of City staff from Economic Development and Finance, was assembled to review each proposal. Using a point-based system, the committee assessed each submission against the specified evaluation criteria, which included:

Evaluation Criteria	
Proposal reflects understanding of the City’s goals and objectives; proposal is complete in its responses to all RFQ elements	30%
Proposed Program Model	25%
Relevant and demonstrated qualifications and experience	30%
Cost of proposed services	15%

Following the evaluation process, the committee identified the Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center as the top-ranked applicant based on their comprehensive understanding of the City’s objectives, the completeness of their responses, the depth of their proposed program model, and their extensive qualifications.

Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center

Founded in San Francisco in 1985, Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center (Renaissance) has been a vital part of Richmond’s small business community since 2008, initially providing business training and consulting services at the Richmond Public Library. Renaissance deepened its local presence in 2014 by establishing its Richmond Center in the Iron Triangle, eventually moving operations to CoBiz, the City’s first coworking space, in 2023. This history reflects Renaissance’s strong commitment to supporting Richmond’s small businesses and its deep understanding of the challenges and needs within the local community.

Renaissance collaborates with a broad network of partners, including the Small Business Administration, East Bay Small Business Development Center, the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, and various local nonprofits, to deliver services tailored to

Richmond's diverse business community. Notably, partnerships with organizations like CoBiz and The Latina Center enhance Renaissance's ability to provide holistic, bilingual support to local entrepreneurs, equipping them with resources to access capital, develop skills, and implement sustainable business practices.

Recommendation and Next Steps

City staff is requesting approval for a contract with Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center for technical assistance and grant administration, with a total contract amount not to exceed \$340,000, with a term from January 7, 2025, through December 31, 2026.

Renaissance will receive \$40,000 of the total contract amount to implement the Small Business Building Beautification Pilot Program (Program), by working in partnership with the City of Richmond and conducting outreach, engaging and working with business owners, implementing the application and review process, distributing grants, and conducting follow-up and reporting. The Program will specifically focus on the Richmond Rising area, where economic support and business stability are critical to revitalization efforts. During the contract period and with the remaining \$300,000, Renaissance aims to assist approximately 20 small businesses in the Richmond Rising neighborhoods, disbursing grants of up to \$15,000 each to support property improvements and community-oriented enhancements.

Renaissance has demonstrated an exceptional ability to fulfill the project and goals of supporting small businesses in the City of Richmond. Following City Council approval, City staff will finalize the contract with Renaissance and begin the development and implementation of the Small Business Building Pilot Program and disbursements for small businesses. City staff will coordinate to ensure a smooth initiation of the work outlined in their proposals, including setting timelines, establishing points of contact, and detailing deliverables. Regular progress meetings will be scheduled to monitor the advancement of each project and to address any issues promptly.

POLICY SYNERGIES:

The Richmond Business Recovery Action Plan, Action 3B, recommends the City to provide support to ensure that small businesses are able to find, afford, and improve brick-and-mortar space.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

- Attachment 1 – Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center Contract
- Attachment 2 – Request for Qualification Posted Online (RFQ)
- Attachment 3 – Scoring Matrix