



AGENDA REPORT

Community Development

DATE:	March 11, 2025
TO:	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
FROM:	Lina Velasco, Director of Community Development
Subject:	Accept and Award Miraflores Interpretative Signage Bids and Authorize Change.
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	The Miraflores Interpretative Signage is funded by a National Park Service Japanese American Confinements Sites grant. An account string will be set up once funds are appropriated. The matching funds required for the project are provided by the Successor Agency to the Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency.
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	In 2020, a grant agreement was executed with the National Park Service (NPA) for \$97,500 with the City of Richmond for the Miraflores Interpretative Signage Project. Due to staff challenges the grant has been extended through April 30, 2025, and can no longer be extended. The grant project completion deadline necessitates authorizing the City Manager to accept and award a contract for the Miraflores Interpretative Signage to avoid potential funding loss.
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	APPROPRIATE a \$97,500 National Park Service Japanese American Confinements Site (JACS) program grant to the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget and ADOPT a resolution granting the City Manager the authority to accept bids and award a contract for the Miraflores Interpretative Signage project to avoid potential loss of grant funds that expire on April 30, 2025 – Community Development Department (Lina Velasco 510-620-6841).

DISCUSSION:

In 2020, a grant agreement was executed with the National Park Services Japanese American Confinements Site (JACS) program for \$97,500 with the City of Richmond for the Miraflores Interpretative Signage Project. Due to staffing challenges causing delays in the Project, the grant agreement has been extended to April 30, 2025. However, the grant agreement can no longer be extended. The grant project completion deadline necessitates authorizing the City Manager to accept and award a contract for the Miraflores Interpretative Signage to avoid potential funding loss.

Project Description

The proposed interpretive project includes research, design, fabrication and installation of permanent interpretive elements about the impact of World War II (WWII) confinement at the former site of Oishi, Sakai and Maeda cut flower nurseries. These nurseries were a portion of a thriving community of Japanese American growers first established in the area circa 1905. By 1910, two clusters of Japanese-owned flower nurseries formed the heart of this close-knit community, and by WWII, approximately twenty nurseries had been established. The historic nursery site is now being developed by the City of Richmond with non-profit and for-profit housing developers into affordable senior housing, market rate homes and a new 4-acre park. Recognition of the site's significance to local, state and national history has led to a plan that includes preservation of several representative buildings and structures from the Sakai and Oishi nurseries — a water tower, an oil tank, several greenhouses and two single-family homes that will be renewed as a community center and headquarters for a youth job development training program. The locally funded preservation of the historic structures will be complimented by a robust program to interpret the site for future generations, which is the subject of the JACS grant award.

The Miraflores Interpretative Signage project will provide an important node where Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park (RORI) can communicate the impact of WWII on Japanese Americans in a place directly affected by wartime policies and programs. All of Richmond's Japanese American residents were forcibly removed and incarcerated during WWII; Tom Oishi, the son of a nursery family who worked as a welder in the Richmond shipyards literally left for Tanforan Assembly Center from his defense job. While most Richmond Nikkei (Nikkei is a Japanese word that literally means "of Japanese lineage") held at Tanforan and Topaz War Relocation Center, others who had moved inland to avoid wartime restrictions found themselves separated from their community in different facilities such as Rohwer War Relocation Center. At least one Richmond man was sent to the Crystal City DOJ facility right after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, while his wife and children were ultimately sent to Amache War Relocation Center.

Because Richmond had an unusually high percentage of nursery families who owned their property, only a few lost their businesses and were unable to return after the war. Several returning families were aided by supportive neighbors who had managed their

property in their absence. Others found that people they had leased their businesses to soon realized that they could make more money subletting the nursery properties to shipyard workers as shelter in a tight housing market. Rebuilding neglected nursery structures and reviving flower production after WWII was hard, grinding labor and some families were interrupted yet again by development of a new highway. Yet Richmond’s Nikkei nursery community was largely rebuilt and was thriving again by the late 1950s and 1960s.

In a series of eight sculptural interpretive elements placed throughout the park and associated with the preserved historic structures, the project will convey the full arc of the Japanese American story in Richmond from 1905 to the turn of the twenty-first century. JACS grant funds were awarded to support design, fabrication and installation of these interpretive elements. The interpretive nodes employ themes such as “Arrival” or “Creating Home,” that allow the Nikkei experience to be communicated alongside those of other Richmond communities, reinforcing links among various people. At the heart of the project are a series of three markers that will convey the impact of the WWII years on the nurseries and the Japanese American families that established them and the WWII and the Japanese American confinement site experience, reinforcing the profound significance of that event in history.

Table 1. Anticipated Project Schedule

Project Phase	Schedule
Design Complete	January 2025
Bid	February 2025
Award	March 2025
Construction	April 2025

The design of the interpretative signage has been reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission and building permits for the work has been reviewed and approved. The bid for the construction work is anticipated to be released in February and posted for a minimum of three weeks with execution of a contract planned for March. City staff anticipates that the construction is anticipated to take less than 30 days. The NPS JACS grant expires on April 30, 2025, so ensuring the contract is awarded and construction work completed in a timely manner is paramount to ensure the grant funds are not lost. The building permits for the signage are ready to be issued, upon award of a construction contract to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder.

SYNERGISTIC POLICIES:

The Miraflores Interpretative Signage project supports General Plan 2030 Historical Resources Element GOAL HR3: Increased Public Awareness of Richmond History. The value of historic resources relies on an adequate level of community awareness. Raise public awareness by educating the public about the City’s past, how it shaped modern-day Richmond and how residents can identify and preserve historically significant properties.

Places such as Richmond's historic Japanese flower nurseries are an important part of the larger confinement site experience and this story is part of the confinement site story. There are currently very few publicly accessible sites where visitors can be educated about the establishment and development of a Japanese American immigrant community, the WWII confinement experience, and post-war rebuilding. By interpreting a place where Japanese Americans were forced to leave their homes and communities for confinement sites, and then rebuilt them after the war, this project conveys the broad continuum of the confinement site experience and addresses an important need in public education about Japanese American history and the confinement site experience.

CONCLUSION:

The project outcome will be to create historical interpretation elements about the impact of WWII confinement at the former site of the Oishi, Sakai and Maeda cut flower nurseries, within the recently created Miraflores greenbelt project that is a publicly accessible open space, used by the City, Rosie the Riveter/WWII National Historical Park, and community organizations.

Staff requests City Council approval to authorize the City Manager to accept and award the construction contract to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder for the Miraflores Interpretative Signage project. This authorization will ensure that the project progresses as scheduled and the City is able to meet all necessary deadlines, maintaining the project's funding and delivery schedule.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

Attachment 1 – Resolution