

# Richmond Keen in 2018?



## 2017 Year End Review and Predictions for 2018

[Tom Butt, Mayor](#), January 1, 2018

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## About [www.tombutt.com](http://www.tombutt.com) and the TOM BUTT E-FORUM

I started the E-FORUM 16 years ago in 2001 primarily to provide Richmond-related news, information and points of view not readily available in the mainstream media, although I have copied and shared a lot of articles from mainstream media over the years. Since then, the traditional print media covering Richmond has diminished even more, but on-line sources have picked up the slack, including sponsored outlets, such as [Richmond Standard and the](#) academically-connected source, [Richmond Confidential](#), which is active during the school year but goes dark in the summer. You can also sign up to receive a number of notifications from the City of Richmond, including the City Manager's Weekly Report at <http://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/list.aspx>.

The first E-FORUM was dated January 13, 2001, and carried information about obtaining public records from the City of Richmond.

E-FORUMS typically fall into three categories:

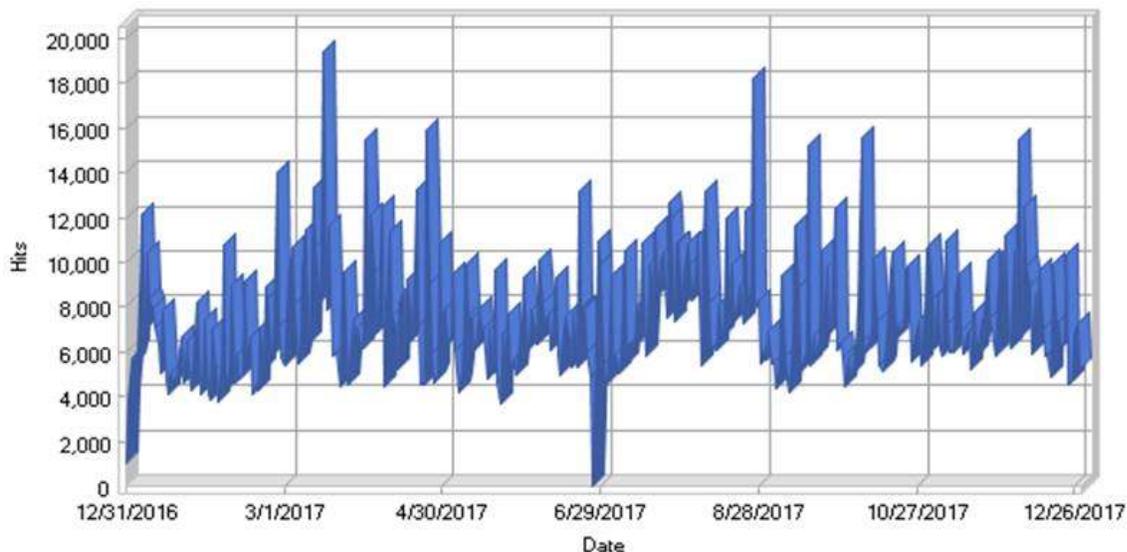
1. Copies of content from other media, including emails from other people and organizations announcing events or providing information.
2. Copies of content from other media with some preliminary editorializing by me.
3. Pieces that are primarily editorial or personal reports.

I have over 4,000 people and about 40 media contacts on my current list, but I understand a lot more people get it through secondary distribution from primary addressees.

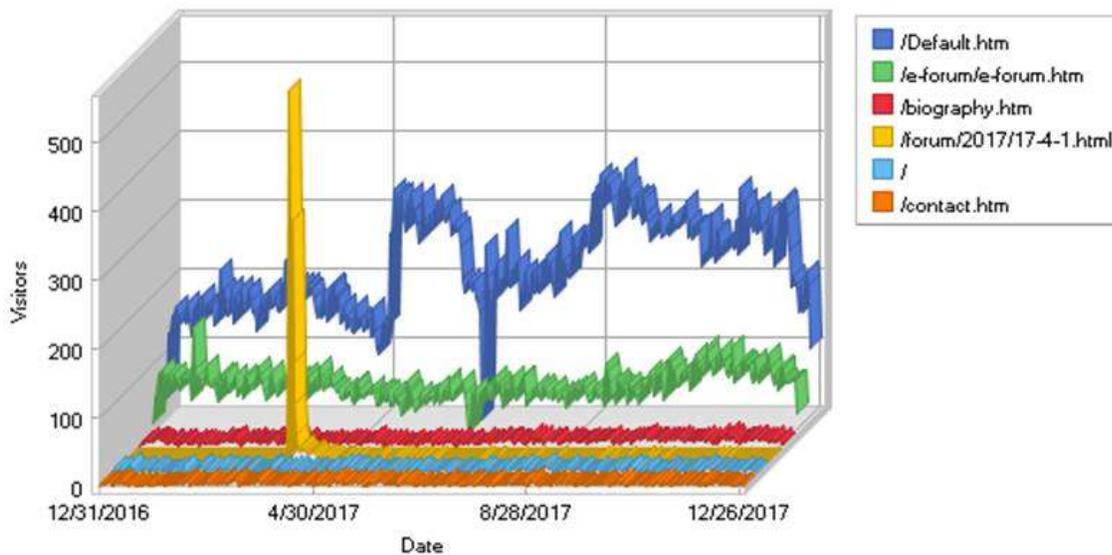
In addition to email distribution, all E-FORUMS beginning in 2001 are accessible on my website at <http://www.tombutt.com/e-forum/e-forum.htm> and <http://www.tombutt.com/archives.htm>.

The website, [www.tombutt.com](http://www.tombutt.com) gets a lot of traffic. In the past 12 months, there were 230,509 visitors and 2,695,640 hits, up from 172,242 visitors and 2,232,910 hits in 2016.

### Daily Hits 2017



### Daily Page Access 2017



At the website [www.tombutt.com](http://www.tombutt.com), the most popular pages in 2017 were:

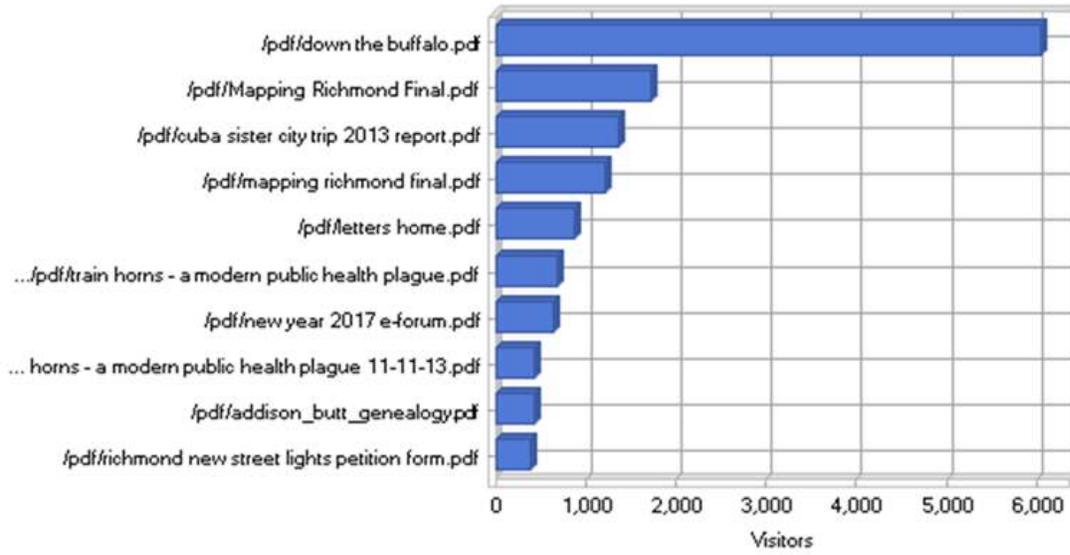
- Tom Butt, Mayor, <http://www.tombutt.com/Default.htm>
- Tom Butt, Mayor | E-forum, <http://www.tombutt.com/e-forum/e-forum.htm>
- Tom Butt, Mayor | About, <http://www.tombutt.com/biography.htm>
- Trump Tweets Dire Threat to Richmond, April 1, 2017, <http://www.tombutt.com/forum/2017/17-4-1.html>
- Tom Butt, Mayor, <http://www.tombutt.com/>

The most popular E-FORUMS accessed in 2017 were:

- Trump Tweets Dire Threat to Richmond, April 1, 2017, <http://www.tombutt.com/forum/2017/17-4-1.html>
- Richmond Police Swamped by Call from Targeted Individuals, May 31, 2015, <http://www.tombutt.com/forum/2015/15-05-31.htm>
- RPA Now in Charge of Democracy? October 20, 2017, <http://www.tombutt.com/forum/2017/17-10-20a.html>
- Help Me Find Owsley's Lab, December 18, 2016, <http://www.tombutt.com/forum/2016/16-12-18.html>
- Marin County Construction Company Owner Who Aided Richmond FBI Probe Commits Suicide, June 1, 2001, <http://www.tombutt.com/forum/2001/010601A.htm>

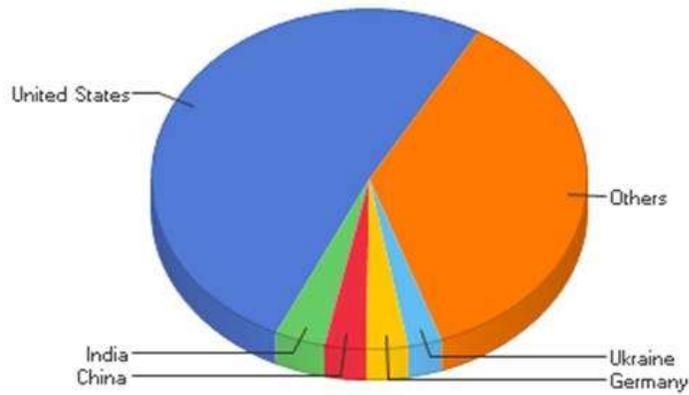
The most downloaded files in 2017 were:

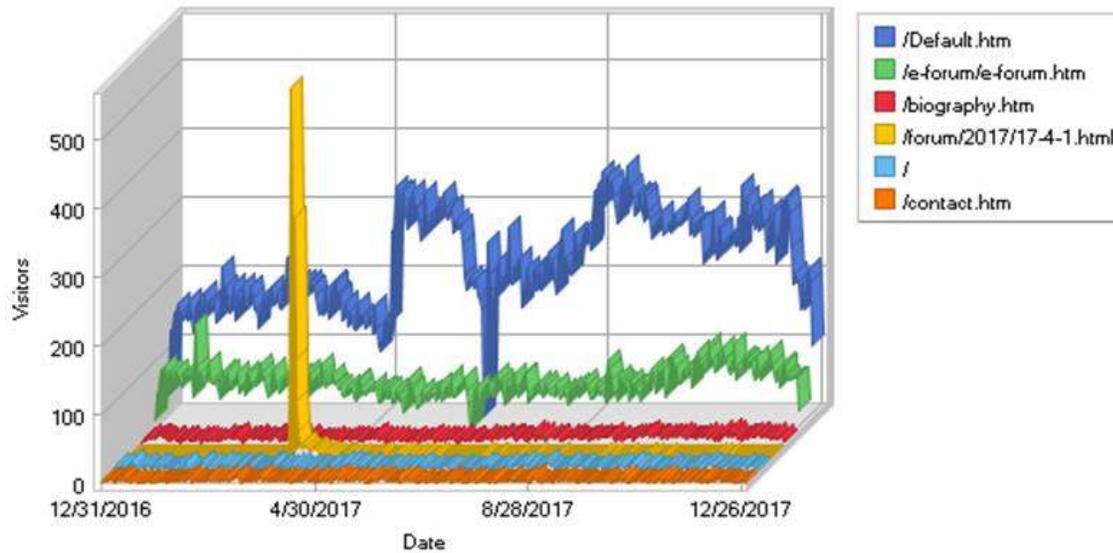
- [http://www.tombutt.com/pdf/down the buffalo.pdf](http://www.tombutt.com/pdf/down%20the%20buffalo.pdf)
- [http://www.tombutt.com/pdf/Mapping Richmond Final.pdf](http://www.tombutt.com/pdf/Mapping%20Richmond%20Final.pdf)
- [http://www.tombutt.com/pdf/cuba sister city trip 2013 report.pdf](http://www.tombutt.com/pdf/cuba%20sister%20city%20trip%202013%20report.pdf)
- <http://www.tombutt.com/pdf/letters%20home.pdf>
- <http://www.tombutt.com/pdf/train%20horns%20-%20a%20modern%20public%20health%20plague%202011-11-13.pdf>



The most active countries in 2017 were:

- United States of America
- India
- China
- Germany
- Ukraine





I get a lot of responses to E-FORUM postings, and I read and appreciate all of them. Sometimes on a controversial subject I will create and send a digest of responses. I respond to a few, but I just don't have time to respond to all of them all of the time.

I have no staff to help with the E-FORUM other than one individual in my office at Interactive Resources who helps me by entering and deleting email addresses and transferring E-FORUM's to my website.

Since 2002, I have prepared some kind of year-end evaluation of City of Richmond services, problems, challenges and wishes. Originally, these were conveyed to my City Council colleagues and the city manager as a way of providing input into the annual city manager performance evaluation and establishing my priorities and legislative objectives for the coming year. Beginning in 2005, I invited public participation, and I have shared the results on my E-FORUM, but I have dropped that the last couple of years due to lack of participation and lack of time.

- **2003**, I shared one of these priorities on the E-FORUM in [New Year's Resolution - A Full Court Press on Blight](#), January 3, 2003.
- **2004**, I went whimsical and authored [Out With The Old – In With The New](#), January 1, 2004, providing a number of awards and multiple choice predictions.
- **2005**, I decided to expand the New Year's Day, [2004 Year-End Review](#), December 31, 2004, to become a broader evaluation of the City of Richmond and to give E-FORUM readers an opportunity not only to participate but to also play the principal role.
- **2006** was [What Can We Fix in 2006?](#), January 1, 2006.
- **2007**, it was [Will Richmond be Heaven in 2007?](#) January 1, 2007.
- At the beginning of 2008 I wrote [Year 2007 Review and Will Richmond be Great in 2008?](#)
- **2009**: [Will Richmond be Fine in 2009?](#)
- **2010**: [2009 Year End Review – Who Will Win in 2010?](#)
- **2011**: [2010 Year End Review – Will Richmond be Riven in 2011?](#)
- **2012**: [In What Will We Delve in 2012?](#)
- **2013**: [What is Foreseen in 2013?](#)
- **2014**: [New Year 2014 Edition - Richmond Serene in 2014?](#) January 1, 2014
- **2015**: [Richmond Lean in 2016?](#) January 1, 2016
- **2016**: [Happy New Year 2017!](#) January 1, 2017

I recommend you take a look at these previous E-FORUMS. You will be amazed at how many challenges have persisted unabated, how many predictions have been fulfilled and how one year's top stories became distant memories a year later.

I extend special thanks to all those citizens and City employees who keep me informed of both problems and solutions all year long. Your input is invaluable. Please keep it up. My [E-FORUM](#) is my best tool for dispensing with my own frustrations, and I hope it provides useful information for those who subscribe.

## Top Richmond Stories of 2017 – My Pick

### Richmond Economic Recovery Continues

2017 has been good news for Richmond on the economic front, including a structurally balanced budget, a bond rating upgrade, record low unemployment, lower vacancy rates, increased real estate values, an uptick in home building and the sale and proposed development of Hilltop Mall.

Largely because of its hard to shake but largely undeserved and decades-old reputation for crime, blight, poverty and pollution (and a dysfunctional City Council), Richmond continues to lag in the red-hot Bay Area economy, but the City is finally beginning to catch up..

According to the [latest data](#) from the US Census Bureau, San Francisco is the richest city in the U.S measured by household income. The median household in the San Francisco area earned nearly \$97,000 last year, an increase of \$8,000 from 2015.<sup>1</sup> In San Francisco, Marin and San Mateo counties, a household income of \$105,350 for a family of four now counts as low income. In those same counties, an income of \$65,800 is “very low,” while \$39,500 is considered “extremely low.” In other areas, including Alameda and Contra Costa counties, \$80,400 is considered low income for a family of four.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to almost all Bay Area cities, the median household income in Richmond is \$55,102,<sup>3</sup> lower than any of the 101 cities in the nine-county Bay Area, except San Pablo.

#### Median Household Income of Cities Near Richmond, CA

(source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_California\\_locations\\_by\\_income#Places](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_California_locations_by_income#Places))

City	Median Household Income
Richmond	54,857
San Pablo	72,746
El Cerrito	60,987
Pinole	74,379
Hercules	100,267
Albany	78,769
San Rafael	75,668
Orinda	166,865
Unincorporated North Richmond	45,703
Unincorporated El Sobrante	60,732

Cities typically rely on real property taxes and sales taxes for the bulk of their revenue, both of which are difficult in Richmond because of its comparatively low income population and real estate values, Richmond perennially struggles economically, but Richmond residents expect the same level of service as their wealthier neighbors. When they find it lacking, they are all too often prone to inaccurately place blame on fiscal mismanagement. The fact is that Richmond is economically challenged, and we have to work hard and be creative to deliver an acceptable level

<sup>1</sup> <https://qz.com/1077050/san-francisco-is-americas-richest-major-metropolitan-area-rising-above-washington-dc-in-the-latest-rankings/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sfgate.com/business/article/Median-income-soars-in-Bay-Area-but-some-are-12196055.php>

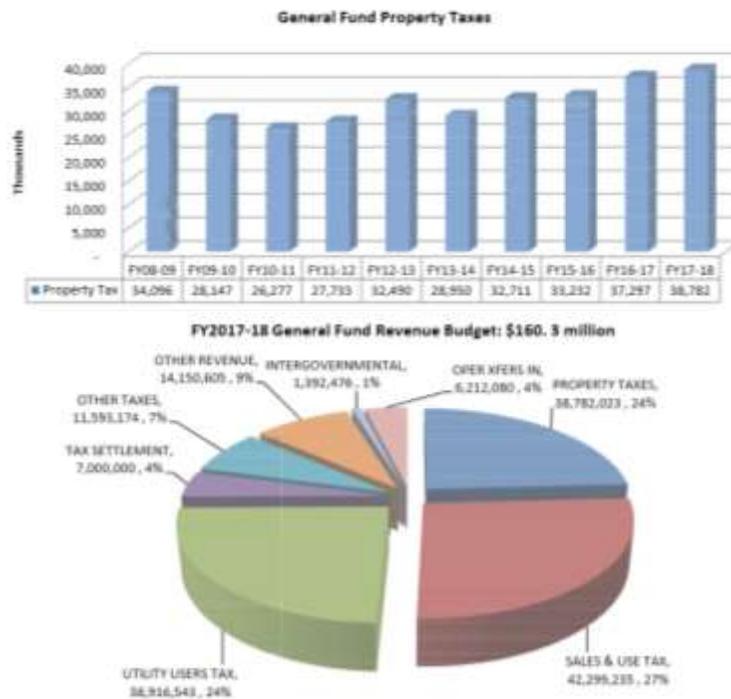
<sup>3</sup> <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/richmond-ca/>. Other sources show slight variations.

of city services. Richmond makes up for low real property tax and sales tax revenue with relatively high utility user taxes, real estate transfer taxes and a one-half percent boost to sales taxes. About one-third of City revenue comes from Chevron through property taxes and utility user tax.

Within the context of this fiscal challenge, however, Richmond continues to do well economically and to chase the Bay Area boom.

### Balanced Budget

The City Council passed a structurally balanced budget in June, buoyed by a continued rise in real property taxes. The General Fund revenue budget totals \$160.3 million for FY 2017-18. The City’s principal revenue sources are property taxes, sales and use taxes, utility user taxes (including a tax settlement with Chevron) and real estate transfer taxes.



### Improved Bond Rating

In December S&P Global Ratings raised the City of Richmond’s issuer credit rating (ICR) to “A-“from “BBB+”. City Manager Bill Lindsay wrote:

While the City is not accessing the credit markets at the current time, the upgraded credit rating would lower the cost of future borrowing. Perhaps more importantly, it serves as an important indicator regarding the overall financial health of the City. The analysis and report (attached to this email) that accompanies the revised credit rating is also informative as to current and future financial management policies.

Following are excerpts from the S&P Global Ratings report:

S&P Global Ratings raised its issuer credit rating (ICR) to 'A-' from 'BBB+' on Richmond, Calif. At the same time, S&P Global Ratings raised its long-term rating and underlying rating (SPUR) to 'BBB+' from 'BBB' on the city's 2009 lease revenue bonds and series 2016 lease revenue bonds. The outlook is positive.

The rating action is based upon our view of the city's recent track record of stable to positive budgetary performance, coupled with management's expectations that this will continue through the current fiscal year. As a result we no

longer consider the city to be structurally imbalanced under our Local Government GO Ratings criteria. The removal of the structural imbalance criteria rating cap lifts the rating to a full rating category (three notches) above the previously amended RBC swap agreement rating termination event of lower than BBB. In addition, we anticipate that the city will increase its budgetary flexibility to a level that we view as strong, or above 8% as a percent of operating expenditures.

The positive outlook is based upon our view that there is a one-in-three chance of a further rating upgrade, of potentially by more than one notch, if the city's fiscal 2017 audit approximates the general fund net results in the unaudited actuals and if the city also maintains at least stable fiscal 2018 and 2019 results. At the same time, the rating and outlook incorporate our view that the city's large pension and other postemployment benefit liability and the lack of a credible plan to address the large obligation could represent a drag on operating performance.

City Manager Bill Lindsay further commented:

S&P comments specifically on the City's recent history of balancing its budget, and indicates that they "no longer consider the city to be structurally imbalanced..." This structural balance has been a focus of the City Council for the past several years, and it clearly needs to continue if the City is to maintain its financial health and achieve the further rating upgrade that is possible, as described in the report.

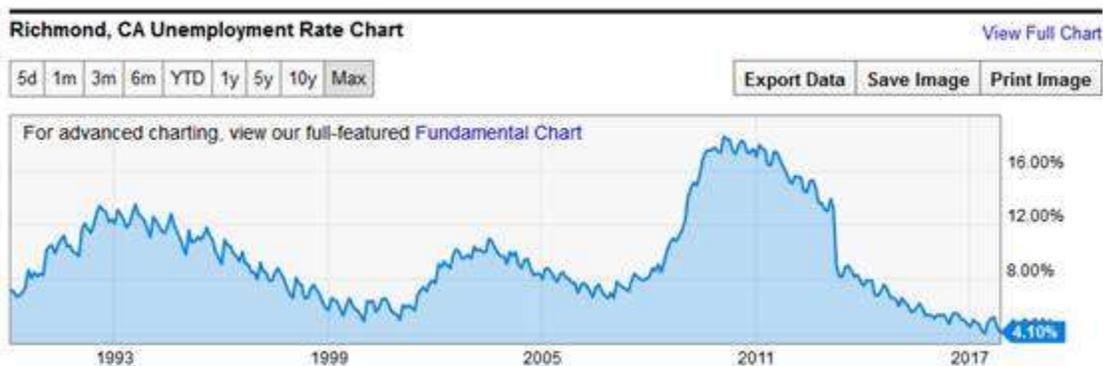
The S&P Report describes budgetary flexibility as "strong," which reflects the improved liquidity (cash balances) that has been increased over the past several years. In sum, the two factors specifically cited by S&P in upgrading the City of Richmond's issuer credit rating are (1) a structurally balanced budget, and (2) cash in the bank. These factors will continue to be emphasized by staff as we discuss the budget at mid-year and as we move in to the FY 2018-19 budget year: balance the budget and maintain healthy cash reserves.

S&P has assigned a "positive outlook" which is an improvement from the most recently evaluated "stable outlook." In short, S&P notes that a future ratings upgrade is possible if the City achieves the financial objectives (balanced budget and healthy liquidity) discussed above.

Finally, and certainly not to be overlooked, is the notation to S&P's report regarding "the city's large pension and other postemployment benefit liability." There are clearly challenges ahead for the City as it works to balance the budget and increase cash reserves, in the form of increased annual pension costs from CalPERS and other post-employment benefits (OPEB). These issues will need to be at the forefront of the City Council's short- and long-term budget discussions during the months ahead.

## Unemployment Rate Plummets

In November of 2017, the unemployment rate for Richmond residents dropped to 3.6%, the lowest on record and possibly the lowest in history. It is more than a full percentage point below the California rate of 4.9% and half a percentage point below the U.S. rate of 4.1%. This is good news, remembering how hard Richmond was hit by the Great Recession with unemployment peaking at 18.5% just six years ago in 2011.



Source: [https://ycharts.com/indicators/richmond\\_ca\\_unemployment\\_rate](https://ycharts.com/indicators/richmond_ca_unemployment_rate)



On November 27, an article in the [Richmond Standard](#), “[Job-training program cancels graduation as all students are working](#)” described how the highly popular [Richmond BUILD](#) career-training program had to cancel its graduation ceremony scheduled for Nov. 17 — and for good reason.

“This is the first time that we had to cancel the graduation because all students (21) received job offers and started working before their scheduled graduation,” said Sal Vaca, director of the City of Richmond’s Employment and Training Dept.

There have been previous cohorts with 100-percent job placements. But this is the first time all students started work prior to graduating, Vaca said.

“With the recent events in the North Bay, a booming construction sector and its direct entry agreements with the Carpenters, Laborers, and Plumbers & Steamfitters Unions, RichmondBuild recently achieved this goal,” according to a report in City Manager Bill Lindsay’s weekly newsletter.

RichmondBUILD preps local residents for high-paying jobs in the construction and renewable energy industries. It was created in 2007 as a way to battle poverty and violence with career opportunity.

“RichmondBUILD’s students overcame many hurdles and sacrificed a lot to complete the rigorous Academy,” Lindsay’s newsletter stated.

With help from funds from the Environmental Protection Agency, students received a 40-hour hazardous materials course (HAZWOPER 40) from LIUNA, Laborers International Union of North America.

Over the last 10 years, some of the largest players in industry throughout the Bay Area, including Chevron Richmond, have supported the program.

A brief list of industry employers hiring RichmondBUILD graduates include Russell Pacific and NET Electric, which are working on the Solar One Project, set to be the Bay Area’s largest publicly-owned solar farm at a 49-acre site provided by Chevron Richmond.

Employers also include IQ Environmental, People Ready, Brand Scaffolding, Carpenters Local 152, Laborers Local 324, Steamfitters & Pipefitters 342, Cherne and Harder Mechanical, according to Vaca.

## Home Values Up

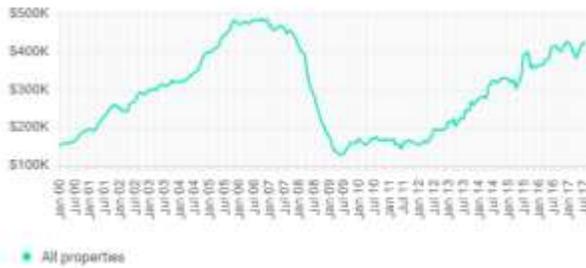
Richmond market trends indicate an increase of \$30,000 (7%) in median home sales over the past year, topping out with a median sales price of \$425,000, but still short of the previous high of \$489,000 in January of 2006. The average price per square foot for this same period rose to \$380, up from \$356.

### Median Sales Price in Richmond

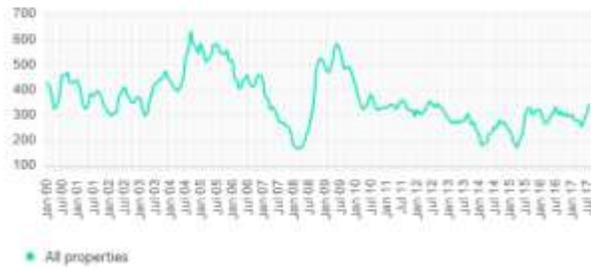
1 Br  2 Br  3 Br  4 Br  All properties

1 yr 5 yr **Max**

Median Sales Price



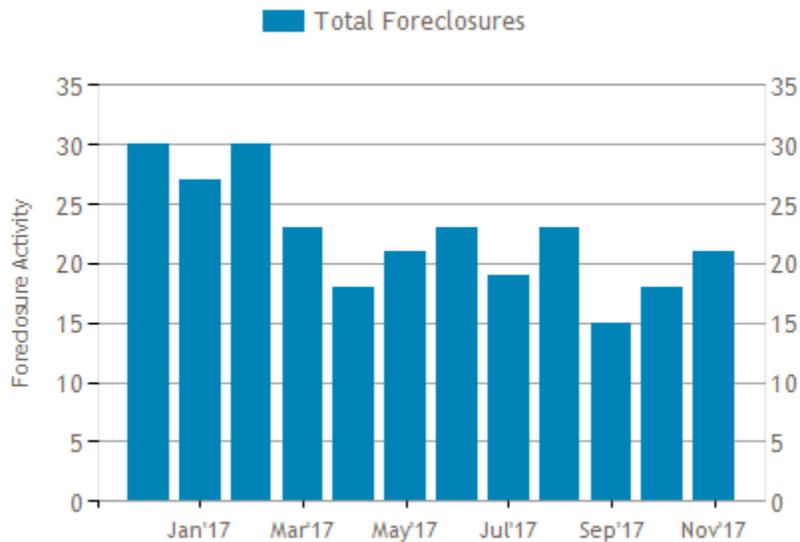
Number of Sales



Source: [https://www.trulia.com/real\\_estate/Richmond-California/market-trends/](https://www.trulia.com/real_estate/Richmond-California/market-trends/)

## Foreclosures

Richmond foreclosures are down 50 percent from 2016 and continuing to trend downward.



Source: <http://www.realtytrac.com/statsandtrends/foreclosuretrends/ca/contra-costa-county/richmond>

## Residential Rents Stable

According to Trulia, the median residential rent in Richmond has stabilized at about \$2,485, while the number of rentals is decreasing, possibly due to landlords selling previously rented single family homes to owner-occupants to avoid Rent Control and Just Cause.

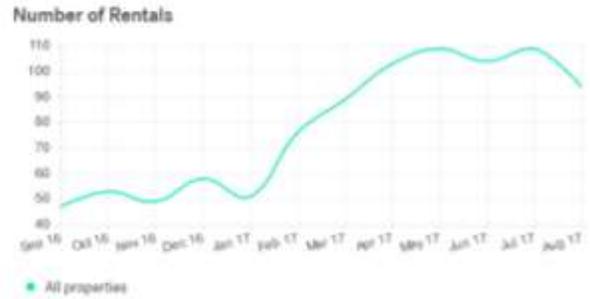
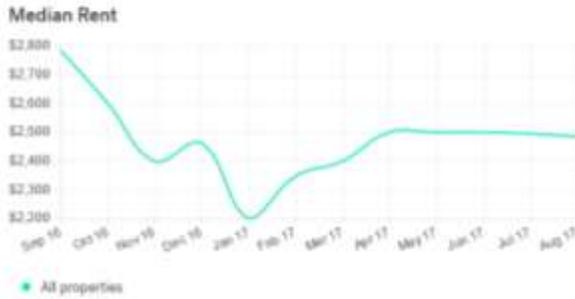
Richmond remains a major real estate bargain with some of the cheapest rents and home prices in the Bay Area. The median rent is \$2,485/month, still on a stable downtrend. The number of units rented is also on a downtrend, possibly a result of rent control, with some single family units and condos being converted to owner-occupied units and renters with rent control electing to stay put in order to lock in low rents.

Just next door in El Cerrito, the median sales price of a home is \$906,500, more than twice that of Richmond. Similarly, the median rental in El Cerrito, just across the street, at \$3,425 is 38 percent higher than Richmond.

### Median Rent in Richmond

1 Br  2 Br  3 Br  4 Br  All properties

6 mo 1 yr



Source: [https://www.trulia.com/real\\_estate/Richmond-California/market-trends/](https://www.trulia.com/real_estate/Richmond-California/market-trends/)

## Homebuilding Rebounds

Residential construction in Richmond appears to have finally hit the tipping point after a decade-long drought.



*The Point in Point Richmond has 28 units renting from \$2,200 for a one bedroom to \$3,667 for a three-bedroom apartment*



[Waterline](#) in Point Richmond is under construction with 60 units priced from \$780,000 to \$1.4 million



Formerly known as “Baywalk,” the fully entitled 25-unit project at Wright Avenue and Marina Way was started by Development Solutions Seascape, LLC, but was picked up by William Lyons Homes and is now under construction

### Commercial Real Estate Vacancies Down, Prices Up

On the commercial real estate front, prices continue to rise, and vacancies continue to drop. The [Third Quarter 2017 Richmond Review](#) from Jeff Leenhouts of Cushman & Wakefield indicates the Richmond warehouse market is just over 6 million square feet, with a 1.2% vacancy rate. The low vacancies and high rental rates of \$0.70/square foot are partially attributed to the demand for illegal marijuana cultivation spaces.

**Richmond Warehouse Vacancy & Average Asking Rate Trend**



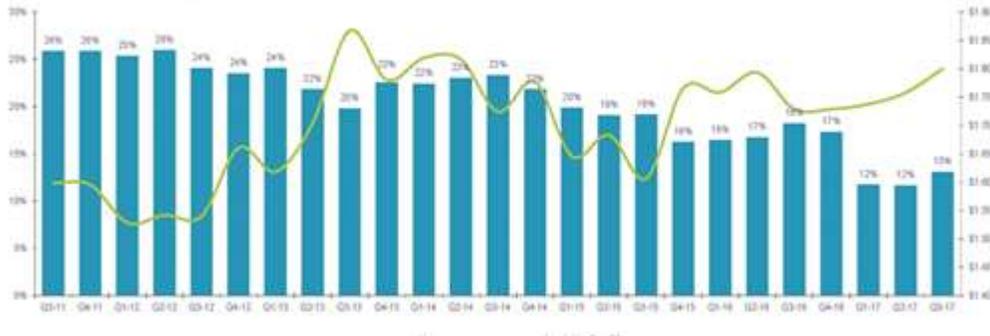
The Richmond manufacturing market is just under 5 million square feet. Vacancies are still low at 5.7% but starting to edge upward. Richmond has a shortage of high quality buildings that are most in demand.

**Richmond Manufacturing Vacancy & Average Asking Rate Trend**



The Richmond office market is about 2.5 million square feet and not doing nearly as well as manufacturing and warehousing. Millennials seem to prefer to work in more urban locations with access to amenities not offered in Richmond.

**Richmond Office & Office/Glex Vacancy & Average Asking Rate Trend**



**Hilltop Mall Purchased**

In 2017, the previously bankrupt Hilltop Mall was acquired by LBG and Aviva Investors. The 1,100,000-square-foot regional mall was originally developed in 1976 and renovated in 2007, and encompasses approximately 77 acres of

land prominently located at the Hilltop Mall exit off of Interstate-80. Current tenants include Macy's, Walmart, Sears, and 24-Hour Fitness, although JC Penny closed this year.

"Hilltop Mall has experienced higher tenant defections and has suffered from deferred maintenance over the past six years as it's been either in foreclosure or lender owned," said Leslie Lundin, Managing Partner for LBG. "LBG's ownership will be the first true developer ownership for Hilltop Mall since the end of the last downturn. Hilltop is a sleeping giant just waiting for a chance to be reborn."

LBG plans to implement an entirely new merchandising strategy for the mall which, when combined with extensive rebranding and redevelopment, will once again create an inviting and exciting atmosphere for shopping, entertainment and dining and revitalize this formerly iconic destination in the East Bay. LBG will explore a larger redevelopment to take advantage of the zoning in place which would allow more than 9,600 housing units at the property as well as office and hotel uses.

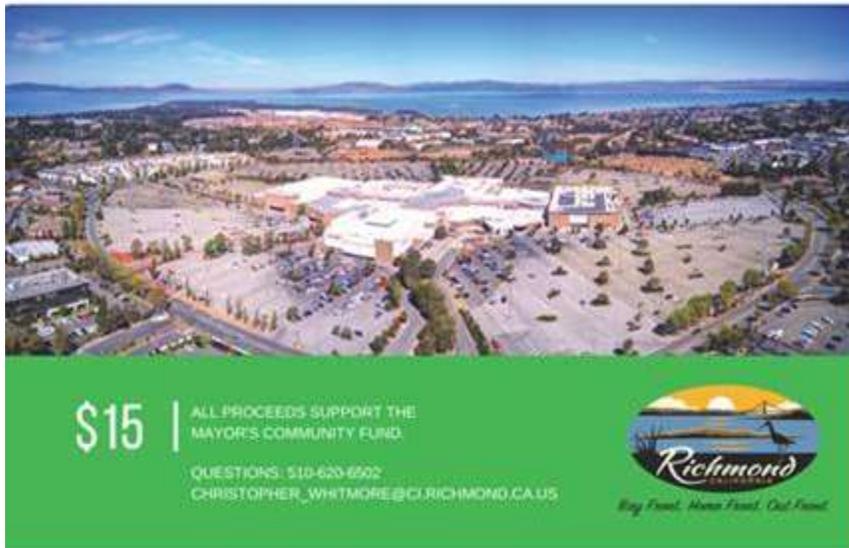
"The Hilltop District has the potential to become the premier East Bay residential mixed use walkable community of the future," said Doug Beiswenger, Managing Partner in charge of entitlements and construction for LBG.

The immediate retail redevelopment will include significant upgrades to the building exterior, interior common areas, and signage surrounding the property. "We believe our reimagined merchandising and branding strategies will increase consumer traffic dramatically, be very well received by the retail community and be well supported by residents throughout the East Bay," said David S. Goldman, Managing Partner in charge of Leasing for LBG.

"The surrounding neighborhood has great growth opportunities that contribute to a strong value-proposition," Russ Bates, head of the Americas of Aviva Investors' Global Indirect Real Estate Group stated, "When considering such an opportunity for our client portfolios, we assess the prospect of repositioning a property along with demographic income levels and buying habits, and are pleased to joint venture with a real estate specialist of the caliber of LBG on this property."

## MAYOR'S BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE | HOSTED BY RICHMOND MAYOR TOM BUTT

OCTOBER 26 | NOON | 2200 HILLTOP MALL RD.



\$15

ALL PROCEEDS SUPPORT THE  
MAYOR'S COMMUNITY FUND.

QUESTIONS: 510-620-6502  
CHRISTOPHER\_WHITMORE@CI.RICHMOND.CA.US



### Richmond BART Station Improvements

On December 8, 2017, the new north (northwest) entry to the [Richmond BART Station](#) was formally opened.

The new entryway on the east side of the station at Nevin Avenue, also known as Richmond Transit Village – Phase II, features a new elevator, a wide ramp for wheelchairs and bicycles, new stairs, and a roundabout with a “kiss-and-drop” zone for people getting rides to BART in cars, on land that previously was used primarily for parking.

Part of the new entryway’s function is to extend the Nevin Avenue Streetscape project, completed earlier this year as a pedestrian-friendly connection between BART and the Civic Center, with sidewalk bulb-outs at corners and other “traffic-calming” features.

Its other function is as a harbinger of a transit-oriented downtown boom, with anywhere from about 900 to more than 1,000 new housing units planned in the near future within a short walking distance of the BART station, including:



*Richmond Mayor Tom Butt, flanked by BART board President Rebecca Saltzman, right, and BART District 7 board member Lateefah Simon, ceremoniously cuts the ribbon on the new eastern entrance to the Richmond BART station on Dec. 18, 2017. (Tom Lochner/Staff)*

- About 280 units, all intended to be “affordable,” at 2123 Nevin Ave., between 21st and 23rd Street.
- Between 300 and 400 units along Macdonald Avenue between 11th and 12th streets, about 70 percent of them market-rate.
- Between 300 and 400 units on a parking lot just north of the new entryway.

Mayor Tom Butt hailed the newly-completed, “fully functional, multi-modal access to BART and Amtrak” as a downtown “catalyst for growth” that will generate housing construction and jobs, and also “build capacity for future ferry riders,” a reference to a cross-Bay connection to San Francisco from the foot of Harbour Way less than two miles toward the south that is expected to take off next year.

Butt said some 8,000 people pass through the combined Richmond BART and Amtrak station daily. A Richmond Visitors Center is planned for the west side of the station, he added.

City Manager Bill Lindsay, who was in the audience at the ceremony, noted that commercial interests also are flocking to downtown Richmond, citing the expected establishment of a co-working center, somewhat akin to Oakland’s Impact Hub, on the ground floor of the BART parking structure west of the station.

“The infrastructure sets the points for the development to follow,” Lindsay said.

Lindsay also noted that the Hacienda housing project a short distance to the northwest on Roosevelt Avenue, which fell into disrepair and was declared uninhabitable, is supposed to be renovated soon, with about 150 apartments, in collaboration with a nonprofit housing developer.

Speaking at the ceremony, along with Butt, were BART board President Rebecca Saltzman and board member Lateefah Simon, who represents District 7, which includes Richmond. Saltzman hailed the partnership between BART and Richmond, saying it “helps catalyze local vitality.” Simon noted that BART had steered more than \$9 million in federal funds to transit-oriented development, in Richmond.

BART spokesman Sean Brooks said later that 28 to 30 of BART’s 44 stations are surrounded by a total of about 250 acres of developable land, mostly used at present for parking, on which BART envisions 20,000 new housing units by 2040.

## Richmond Ferry Terminal Breaks Ground



*An artist's rendering of the future terminal Wednesday, November 1, 2017*

[The San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority \(WETA\) and the city of Richmond today are breaking ground](#) on the Richmond Ferry Terminal. The facility is located at the southern point of the Ford Peninsula in Richmond, adjacent to the Ford Assembly Plant building. The construction project is the final step toward the launch of new ferry service between Richmond and San Francisco, expected to begin in September 2018. The new service will provide a critical expansion to regional ferry operations, help alleviate traffic congestion and increase WETA’s emergency response capabilities.

“The new Richmond terminal marks another major milestone in our expansion of ferry service across the Bay,” said Nina Rannells, WETA executive director. “On behalf of the WETA Board of Directors and staff, I’d like to thank the City of Richmond and Mayor Butt for their partnership in putting this project into action. It’s an exciting day for Richmond and for Bay Area commuters.”

The Richmond Ferry Terminal Project includes the construction of an ADA-compliant gangway and ramping system, float and piles, passenger shelter, and development and reconfiguration of a 362-space paved parking lot. WETA will also install a new ADA-compliant kayak launch ramp. Ferry service between Richmond and San Francisco is expected to begin in September 2018, with three morning and four afternoon departures.

“Adding Richmond to the commuter ferry network has been an endeavor that I and other transit advocates have worked on for decades. It’s hard to believe we are in the home stretch,” said Richmond Mayor Tom Butt. “The excitement and anticipation for the ferry has been growing rapidly. Residents, businesses, employees and commuters in the East Bay are more than ready to take advantage of this new connection to downtown San Francisco.”

Joining Butt and Rannells at the groundbreaking are residents and civic, government and business officials, including Jim Wunderman, WETA vice chair and Bay Area Council president and CEO; State Senator Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley); Assemblymember Tony Thurmond (D-Richmond); Federal D. Glover, MTC commissioner and chair of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors; and John Gioia, supervisor of Contra Costa County (District One) and member of the California Air Resources Board.

MTC is providing \$12 million in Regional Measure 2 bridge toll funds to help purchase two ferries for the new service. Passed by Bay Area voters in 2004, RM2 raised tolls by \$1 on the region’s seven state-owned toll bridges in order to finance highway, public transit, and bicycle and pedestrian projects to relieve congestion in the bridge corridors and their approaches.

The capital project is also funded by State Proposition 1B and U.S. Department of Transportation funds, with operational funding from Contra Costa County Measure J and fare revenue. The total project cost for terminal and landside construction is estimated at between \$20 million.

The project is one example of WETA’s strategic efforts to address increased demand for ferry service and expand its capacity and operations. It is investing \$465 million in assets — including new terminals, maintenance facilities and vessels. WETA’s 2016 Strategic Plan outlines a vision for 44 vessels, 16 terminals, 12 routes and a 740 percent increase in peak capacity by 2035. Recently, WETA broke ground on the Downtown San Francisco Ferry Terminal Expansion Project and launched two new state-of-the-art 400-passenger vessels, the M.V. Hydrus and the M.V. Cetus.

## Richmond Wins Platinum and Gold Sustainability Awards

**RICHMOND, CA, August 2, 2017** – Mayor Tom Butt was informed yesterday that the City of Richmond has earned two Beacon Spotlight Awards from the Institute for Local Government – a Gold Level Award for 13% Community Greenhouse Gas Reductions and a Platinum Level Award for Sustainability Best Practices.

The Beacon Program highlights innovative practices of local government through awards and information sharing that contributes to developing greener, healthier, and more sustainable communities. “Our hard work in advancing Richmond’s sustainability goals is really catching people’s attention. It’s inspiring bold action in other cities and improving the lives of our residents,” said Mayor Tom Butt. “We’ve been prioritizing cutting edge initiatives for years and I’m very grateful that we continue to have our successes highlighted throughout the state with these Beacon Spotlight Awards.”



The City of Richmond joined the Beacon Program in 2016 and in its first year won a Gold Level Award for 14% Agency Energy Savings and a Gold Level Award for Sustainability Best Practices. Building on that recognition, the City was again recognized for the growing list of governmental and community-based initiatives. The 2017 awards can be attributed in part to neighborhood projects improving walkability and access to parks, schools, and public transit connections including the ferry terminal, which is currently under construction. New efforts to expand renewable energy were also highlighted including solar installations completed by the City on 98 public housing units and the City Council’s decision to opt-in to MCE’s 100% Deep Green Renewable Energy Service.

Mayor Butt noted, “These investments demonstrate our unwavering commitment to protect our residents and to fight climate change. Along the way, we’ve found great opportunities to share our practices with other cities, and we’ve participated nationally and globally to contribute to the growing environmental justice movement.”

The Institute for Local Government reviews 10 sustainability best practice categories, and Richmond’s application included a total of 37 different examples of projects and initiatives in every category. The award application was prepared by the Mayor’s Office Director of Policy and Strategy, Christopher Whitmore. The mayor and councilmember’s have been invited to accept the awards at a special ceremony in September hosted by the League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties and the Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative.

More information about the Beacon Program and details about the City of Richmond's awards can be found at the following link: <http://www.ca-ilg.org/beacon-participant-profile/city-richmond>.

A copy of the City's 2017 submission can be seen here:  
<https://ca-richmond3.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/43399>

## Branding and Marketing Study Completed

The Richmond Branding and Marketing Study is complete. [Click here for The Final Presentation](#), which is a lengthy summary of how the process evolved and how the work products can be used by multiple organizations for multiple purposes. There are dozens of appendices that include detailed graphics and examples of how the marketing kit can be deployed.



*Bay Front. Home Front. Out Front.*

This has been a lengthy and often controversial process that we have been working on since 2015 as an initiative of the Mayor's Office paid for entirely with private donations of \$104,000. There is no City money involved.

Richmond is a diverse city, which we found is perceived one of its major strengths. But we also found that there is a vast diversity of opinions about what Richmond's "brand" should be, how Richmond should be marketed, to whom it should be marketed and even if it should be marketed at all (one person's economic development is another person's gentrification).

This effort was far more than developing a logo and a strapline. The consultant was [North Star Destination Strategies](#), and the first phase included a massive and exhaustive market research effort both inside and outside of Richmond, which was completed at the end of 2015 and presented to the City Council on January 26, 2016. Click on [Richmond Research Report](#), which includes fascinating detail about people's perceptions of Richmond.

One of the things we learned from North Star is that it is more effective to build a marketing effort on positive perceptions than to try and reverse negative perceptions. Exhaustive market research confirmed that perceptions of Richmond associated with crime (unsafe and dangerous), blight, poverty, industry and poorly performing schools are persistent whether or not we agree. On the other hand, there are strong positive perceptions about Richmond's waterfront location, Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park and the Bay Trail, as well as its central Bay Area location, diversity, affordability, transportation options and development opportunities. Of those outside Richmond who were queried, diversity, affordability and accessibility were among the strongest positive perceptions.

Positive perceptions, such as "affordability" and "diversity" are difficult to portray graphically because of their intangibility. On the other hand, reinforcing Richmond's image as a waterfront city has no graphic limitations, and it results in strong positive associations as well as being historically accurate.

A marketing strapline is intended to summarize what a brand stands for in just a few words. It doesn't have to be descriptive (although some are, like eBay's "The world's online market place"), but it should support a brand's positioning and communicate what the subject is about. The first two statements in the strapline, *Bay Front. Home Front. Out Front.*, are obvious, but the third, "Out Front," is more subtle. It references Richmond's recent initiatives and leadership in sustainability, health, social justice and government (such as community policing).

North Star concluded its market research phase with the following Brand Platform Rationale that summarized the **positive perceptions about Richmond.**

**For people seeking a Bay Area existence without being cramped or crushed by cost, Richmond offers some of the most affordable housing in the Bay Area particularly in a city with a waterfront.**

- The city also has prized sites and buildings sought after by business and industry.
- Although unknown to some there are great parks and open space in Richmond.
- There is less density in Richmond than other parts of the Bay Area.
- Homeownership is still attainable in Richmond.
- Convenient access to all of the Bay Area with BART and the future ferry will expand that reach and convenience.

**Richmond, with the most miles of shoreline along the East Bay,**

- Many do not associate Richmond with the waterfront but should.
- This key asset allows Richmond to feature all of its beauty throughout the community.
- It demonstrates the industrial access of the port and transportation assets.
- Richmond has more miles of the Bay Trail finished than most and boasts one of the best if not the best dog park in the Bay Area.
- People love being along the water and associate a particular vibe to that.

**Richmond is a diverse community with a steel resolve**

- Richmond is home to diverse cultures and ethnicities. A distinction that some Bay Area communities are losing or at least diluting.
- There is great diversity in the philanthropic pursuits here as many lead in reforms for social issues affecting many communities.
- Many companies are discovering the advantages of the business environment, access to space, and hardworking workforce in Richmond.
- Richmond's rich history is about hard work, sacrifice, and global impact. Rosie and shipbuilding are figuratively and literally about steel resolve.

- That resolve is present today in how Richmond approaches challenges and growth. Tackling difficult issues in unconventional ways to achieve great results. And that extends to the great ideas in the business community on how to create and deliver products.
- Steel resolve is believable today because of your past history. It lets you claim that strength and personality and makes it relevant to today

As you can see the initial Brand Platform Rationale is important for its content, not necessarily the poetry of its narrative. So North Star distilled the Brand Platform Rationale to a simple sentence, called the Brand Platform that is intended to include the most compelling description of Richmond's brand.

### **North Star Suggested Brand Platform for Richmond**

For people seeking a Bay Area existence without being cramped or crushed by cost, Richmond, with the most miles of shoreline along the East Bay, is a diverse community with a steel resolve so great ideas are fulfilled on the home front of the next greatest generation

Finally, North Star suggested the following strapline: "Bay Front. Home Front. Out Front."

I like the strapline, but frankly, I find the Brand Platform statement a little clunky, a little cheesy and not very descriptive. Everywhere I go, I need to explain Richmond to people, and I use some variation of the following "elevator speech." (An elevator speech is a clear, brief message or "commercial." It communicates who you are, what you're looking for and how you can benefit the listener. It's typically about 30 seconds, the time it takes people to ride from the top to the bottom of a building in an elevator).

### **Tom Butt Richmond Elevator Speech**

Richmond is a historic waterfront city on San Francisco Bay, about five miles north of Berkeley, with a population of 110,000. Businesses and residents are attracted to Richmond because of its cultural and ethnic diversity, affordability, climate, central location in the Bay Area and access to multi-modal transportation. Richmond has more miles of shoreline and more miles of Bay Trail than any other city on San Francisco Bay. It is the home of Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park and still has the "We can do it" brashness of its wartime shipyard workers.

Whether or not the City of Richmond will actually adopt the logo designed by North Star is unknown. The current logo, shown below, was adopted by the City Council in 1977.



Interestingly, like the new logo, it is focused on images suggestive of Richmond's waterfront. From the City Council Minutes, June 20, 1977 (Resolution 132-77). Unlike the proposed new one, it requires a supplementary explanation to decipher the symbolism.

A proposed resolution adopting and authorizing use of Richmond logo letterhead designs was presented. (A new logo is proposed for the City which expresses through color and form, the maritime future of the City). Councilman Greco, Chairman of the Programs and Planning Committee, reported that his committee

reviewed the matter and recommended approval and made a motion, seconded by Councilman Grydyk that the recommendation be accepted. On request of Councilman Corcoran, Lance Burris, Economic Development and Renewal Administrator of the Redevelopment Agency, displayed the logo and explained its meaning as follows:

- 1) The form approximates the shape of the Pacific Ocean.
  - 2) The arrow shape indicates the thrust into the Pacific of the port Development. The line used in the letterhead indicates rail support to the Port Activity.
  - 3) The point of the arrow approximates the shape of a sail boat, with a wake trailing behind.
  - 4) The blue symbolizes the maritime future of the City and the red brick the color of City Hall and new construction.
  - 5) The three shapes making up the basic form include a hill shape (Hilltop), a boat hull shape (The Harbour), and an “S” shape for the City’s regional service activities (Downtown).
- There being no further comments, the motion passed and Resolution 132-77 was adopted by the unanimous vote of the Council.

Instead of a strapline, Richmond currently uses the motto, or nickname, “City of Pride and Purpose.” Some people really like this, but to others it is so generic that it is meaningless. It says nothing distinctive about Richmond. Every city has a slogan, motto, nickname or strapline, and so should Richmond. [Click here](#) for a comprehensive list of city slogans, mottos, nicknames and straplines.

The origin of the motto, “City of Pride and Purpose,” is obscure. People struggle to discern its meaning. Pride, being one of the [seven deadly sins](#), doesn’t seem to be a good start for a motto. And as for purpose – what purpose?

In any event, the work is done, and the extensive work product is out there. What we do with it remains to be seen, but you can look for it on my business cards and baseball caps.

## North Richmond Annexation Inches Ahead

Everyone pretty much agrees that that North Richmond is an unincorporated anomaly surrounded by the City of Richmond that is the historical result of racism and discrimination. What they don’t agree on is whether North Richmond should be annexed into the City of Richmond.

Emerging from WWII with an almost entirely African American population, the 3,929 people who live in North Richmond today are a more diverse population including about 33% African American and about 50% Hispanic (2010 Census).

The defining characterization of North Richmond can be found in a series of articles, “A Journey into North Richmond,” by Robert Rogers in 2011 when he was a Berkeley graduate student in journalism writing for *Richmond Confidential*:

- [Part 1: North Richmond, a neighborhood on the brink](#)
- [Part 2: North Richmond’s inauspicious beginnings](#)
- [Part 3: Blues](#)
- [Part 4: Moribund housing projects](#)
- [Part 5: North Richmond man](#)
- [Part 6: Everyday struggle](#)
- [Part 7: Troubled environment](#)
- [Part 8: Where the city’s boundaries end](#)
- [Part 9: Crime beyond the statistics](#)

The latest projection of the economic impact of annexation can be found at <https://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/3474/North-Richmond-Annexation> .

After a skirmishing debate that that swirled for months, the City Council settled on a “dual approach” in October 2017 that that would include some kind of plebiscite but also initiation of the annexation application process through the Contra Costa County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), which has its own complex system of protest and votes. The concept is that if the plebiscite fails to show support for annexation, the City Council could pull the plug on the LAFCO annexation application.

The *East Bay Times* wrote in “[Council approves dual-track approach to North Richmond annexation.](#)”

There has been broad consensus among officials that North Richmond becoming part of Richmond could remedy a shameful piece of history. The unincorporated community, sandwiched between San Pablo and its namesake Bay, but surrounded entirely by the city of Richmond, resulted from World War II-era housing restrictions on African-Americans. Later, Richmond annexed the Hilltop area, making it contiguous to the rest of the city via a thin strip of land between the Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad tracks, while bypassing North Richmond.

Officials also broadly agreed that North Richmond residents would likely get better services, among them law enforcement, by being represented at Richmond City Hall rather than at the more distant county seat of Martinez. On the downside, North Richmond’s property taxes would go up under annexation, as would the real estate transfer tax. Residents also would become subject to the city’s utility tax.

But officials differed on how to time and prioritize various steps toward possible annexation. On Tuesday, the council voted to get the ball rolling by approving an annexation application to the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), a regional agency that oversees expansion or dissolution of cities and local governments.

The council voted to send a mailing to North Richmond residents that includes answers to frequently asked questions about annexation, and an informal ballot asking residents whether they are for or against annexation.

The results of the informal ballot and/or the LAFCO application process will likely play out in 2018.

## Rent Control and Just Cause Roil Richmond

While the rent control and just cause ordinance was supported by about 2/3 of the voters in the 2016 election, it did not legally take effect until January of 2017. The process of developing the multi-million bureaucracy to run [Richmond Rent Program](#) has been going on for more than a year and is still far from complete.

Appointment of the five Rent Board members took several months and was just the beginning of a contentious process that continues even now. Advocates of rent control wanted a board of rent control advocates entirely picked by the Richmond Progressive Alliance. See “[Mayor Holds Off on Rent Board Appointment.](#)” What we ended up with is a more balanced board that has gotten good reviews from everyone. See “[We Have a Rent Board.](#)” March 22, 2017.

As it turns out, the Rent Board has gotten great reviews from all sides, and Chair David Gray has done an admirable job of keeping the struggling startup on course.

Through 2017, however, there has been a steady stream of complaints from both landlords and renters about a lack of information on rent control and just cause. With Rent Board staff still being hired, people complain that no one answers the phone or responds to emails.

In the final months of 2017, the Rent Board has prompted protests from hundreds of owner-occupants who have been billed for businesses licenses, inspection fees and Rent Board fees even though they are not landlords.

No small number of otherwise exempt landlords who have needed to move out tenants to sell a unit or occupy it themselves are surprised to learn that under “just cause,” such an action results in a penalty of tens of thousands of dollars in relocation costs for the tenant.

There is evidence that many people who supported Rent Control and Just Cause never fully understood it or assumed it would never affect them. Perhaps the most notorious were Eli Moore<sup>4</sup> and Claudia Jimenez<sup>5</sup>. As program manager for the Haas Institute, Moore wrote the studies on which rent control and just cause in Richmond was based, and his spouse, Jimenez, co-authored the petition that put Measure L on the ballot.

When they both departed for an extended stay in Jimenez' native Colombia earlier this year, they rented out both their house and an accessory unit without taking out a business license, registering for rental inspections, or registering with the Rent Board, a violation of the law they both played a major role in passing. When exposed, Jimenez first wrote in an email, "Mayor Butt is coming after us and spreading rumors that we are doing something illegal with our house," and followed with, "We are looking into whether there are some forms we need to file." Finally she conceded, "We failed to turn in some papers and pay a small fee."

## Debunking the RPA Myth



### McLaughlin and Beckles Seek State Offices to Share the "Richmond Miracle"

With a 2016 election that put the Richmond Progressive Alliance (RPA) in firm control with a supermajority on the City Council and a new bible, Steve Early's *Refinery Town*, the RPA branched out into state politics. Having saved Richmond ("remaking an American city"), the RPA wanted to share its successes with the rest of California.

Former Mayor and later councilmember Gayle McLaughlin resigned in July 2017 to run for lieutenant governor on a progressive platform that embraces single payer, free college, Prop 13 reform, no fracking, oil severance tax, millionaires' tax, immigrant rights, affordable housing, opposition to charter schools, supporting unions, campaign finance reform, opposition to private prisons and public banking. Most of these are also on the standard California Democratic Party wish list, except perhaps public banking and charter schools.

McLaughlin has been touring California, often with author Steve Early

<sup>4</sup> Moore holds himself out as an expert on Richmond's economy and housing stock, on which he has studied and written extensively. He was a primary author of several studies about Richmond [Belonging and Community Health in Richmond](#) and [Anchor Richmond](#) that served as manifestos on which Rent Control was based and on which the successful challenge that doomed the Global Campus was based. Moore is a [program manager for the Haas Institute](#), "has written a number of reports and strategy papers on environmental justice, mass incarceration, community economic development and community health issues." The rent Control ordinance, in which Eli and Claudia presumably had a role in drafting, extensively cites the Haas Institute in the "Findings" (RMC 11.100.020). "Eli draws on training and experience with geographic information systems, mixed methods research, conflict mediation and negotiation, and popular education to facilitate participatory processes that allow those most affected by injustice to lead decision making and advance transformative change." He holds a Bachelor's degree from University of California at Santa Cruz and dual Masters degrees from Syracuse University.

<sup>5</sup> Claudia Jimenez was a community organizer for RPA (and is still on the RPA Steering Committee) and the co-signer of the petition that put rent control on the ballot (<https://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/41144>). The Notice of Intent to Circulate an Initiative entitled the "Richmond Fair Rent, Just Cause for Eviction and Homeowner Protection Ordinance," is a public document that lists her home address. Jimenez also filed to run for the City Council seat vacated by me when I became mayor and she was also the Richmond's Progressive Alliance's preferred choice for the City Council seat ultimately awarded to Vinay Pimple. Claudia Jimenez also knows something about building, being a licensed architect in her native Colombia. "The best way for us to protect Richmond renters from increasingly high rents and unjust evictions is to bring this ballot measure to the voters. As a homeowner in Richmond since 2009, I support this renter protection ordinance because it will help to stabilize the community. Half of the population in Richmond are renters, and half of them or more pay more than 30 percent of their income for rent. I would hate to see my neighbors have to move and be forced out of their housing because they do not have any protection as renters." (<http://www.thestreetspirit.org/the-struggle-for-renter-protections-in-richmond/>)

promoting his book, meeting with [Our Revolution](#), Berniecrats, and [Social Democrat](#) groups supported by a number of groups, including California Nurses Assoc/NUU, National Union of Healthcare Workers, SEIU Local 1021, University Professional & Technical Employees/CWA Local 9119, Richmond Progressive Alliance, Oakland Justice Coalition, Greenpeace, Communities for a Better Environment, Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, Sunflower Alliance, SF Progressive Democrats of America, East Bay Democratic Socialists of America, Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club, Solidarity, Roots Action ,Coalition for Grassroots Progress, Oscar Grant Committee, Labor Notes, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Socialist Alternative Bay Area, Left Elect Network and AFSCME Local 3299.

The flyer for one event states:

Gayle McLaughlin, former mayor of Richmond, Ca., has served as the first corporate-free progressive officeholder on the Richmond City Council, elected first as a councilmember in 2004, then as mayor in 2006 and re-elected in 2010; having termed out as mayor, she was elected again to the City Council in 2014. As Mayor of Richmond, Gayle led the City in a progressive direction that kept city workers in jobs and city services in place even during the recession; held Chevron accountable in terms of reducing its pollution and paying an historic \$114 million dollars in additional taxes; and reduced crime dramatically. She attributes her success in elected office to having an organization behind her (one she helped create) - the Richmond Progressive Alliance.

McLaughlin's fundraising page states, "As a two-term Mayor of Richmond CA, I led a successful grassroots movement to liberate our city from the grip of corporate giants and wealthy special interests."

No question about it, Gayle McLaughlin has been a productive and high profile mayor and councilmember, pioneering the transformation of the Richmond City Council into a supermajority now consisting of five members of the Richmond Progressive Alliance, of which she was a co-founder. Her affiliation with the Green Party and Bernie Sanders have set her apart, and her trips to Ecuador and Cuba have raised her profile internationally. At one city hall in Cuba, her photo was on a wall of heroes right next to Abraham Lincoln!

She is now running for lieutenant governor on a progressive platform and the story that she "led Richmond through a remarkable transformation."

McLaughlin led Richmond through a remarkable transformation, reducing homicides 75% in 8 years, forced Chevron to pay on average an additional \$7.5 million in taxes per year for 15 years, promoted Community Choice Aggregation for utilities with 85% of homeowners and businesses now receiving greener and cheaper energy, increased the minimum wage, passed the first rent control law in California in 30 years, and challenged abusive bankers by promoting the idea of using the city eminent domain powers to keep homeowners in their homes during the foreclosure crisis.<sup>6</sup>

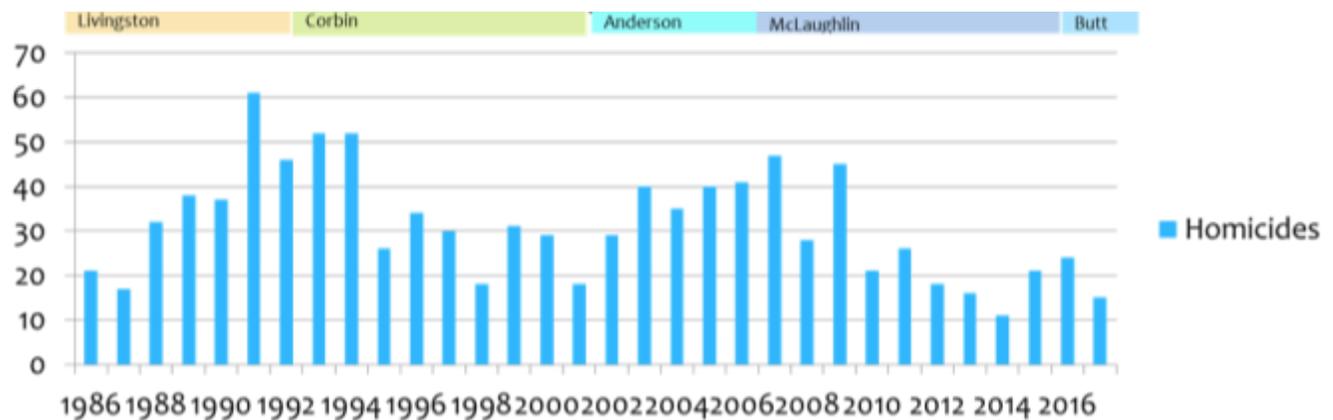
It's a good story, but like most political stories, it has been substantially embellished. One thing McLaughlin and the RPA are truly good at is getting elected. They are also very good at taking credit, whether they earned it or not. One thing they are very poor at is acknowledging the essential collaboration of others, particularly others who are not of their party.

Fact Check:

- **"Reducing homicides 75% in 8 years"** The number of homicides in Richmond has been volatile over the past 30 years, following cyclical trends ranging from the high forties to over 60 in the worst years to lows that are in the teens in the best years, that have no discernable relation to who was mayor. The relative reduction in McLaughlin's terms was not radically different from that in Corbin's terms as mayor. Both McLaughlin and the RPA have taken credit for the most recent reduction and have most often cited the community policing model brought by former Police Chief Chris Magnus as the critical determinant.

<sup>6</sup> <http://myemail.constantcontact.com/Announcing-My-Run-for-Lieutenant-Governor-of-California-2018.html?soid=1103143824106&aid=ckTf-vcZhSc>

As RPA domination of the Richmond City Council grew to a supermajority, homicides doubled, but they are still comparatively low historically. We have 15 homicides in 2017, the second lowest since 1986, the limit of available records. 2014 was the lowest with 11.



*Richmond homicides through the years tend to be cyclical. Every elected mayor has seen both high and low rates. The 2017 homicide count is 15, down 37.5 percent from 2016*

The chronicle of the RPA's remarkable transformation of Richmond is Steve Early's *Refinery Town*, an entire chapter of which ("Richmond's Community Policeman") is focused on reform of the Richmond Police Department by Chief Chris Magnus, implying that the reduction in crime and national recognition during Magnus' term was a result of RPA leadership.

Early writes on page 4, "McLaughlin hired a good government city manager [Bill Lindsay], who straightened out the city's books, as well as a new police chief who retrained the city's force to emphasize community relations and de-escalation," and "Progressive leaders in Richmond hired a visionary gay police chief, who increased public safety through real community policing

On page 68, Early writes "Fortunately, City Manager Bill Lindsay and then city councilor Gayle McLaughlin and others in city government decided to take a chance on a man none celebrated as one of the country's most effective police reformers.

It was neither the City Council nor any RPA member who selected and hired Chris Magnus. It was solely Bill Lindsay, but we all, of course, took credit. Although the RPA embraced Magnus, he was not a fan of the RPA and did not reciprocate their admiration. On January 24, 2017, Chris Magnus posted on Facebook (Everybody's Richmond California), "They [RPA] are basically the Green Party version of Trump. Same basic level of intolerance and insecurity."

Neither did McLaughlin nor the RPA hire Lindsay. On page 4, *Refinery Town* states, "McLaughlin hired a good government city manager [Bill Lindsay], who straightened out the city's books.... and on page 46, *Refinery Town* states, "One of the most important actions that McLaughlin and council allies like Tom Butt took, even before she became mayor, was hiring Bill Lindsay as city manager." The fact is that Bill Lindsay was hired on December 7, 2004, before McLaughlin or any other RPA member were on the City Council. It was a majority that included mostly RPA foes who actually hired Lindsay.

Although embracing Magnus and his reforms, the RPA has continued to be at war with the Police Department ever since the Richmond Police Officers Association (RPOA) attacked RPA candidates in elections as far back as 2008. Despite any evidence of bias against African Americans by the Richmond Police Department, RPA members seized on the spirit of "Black Lives Matter" and set about to expand the

powers of the Police Citizens Review Commission. In the Pedie Perez matter, Individual RPA members took the side of the Perez family despite no evidence from multiple investigations that Perez was murdered by a police officer. Jovanka Beckles took on the Richmond Police Officers Association, saying, “When I speak about the police officers association, I want everyone to realize, I’m not speaking about the rank and file, I am speaking solely about the police officers association. We all read the news, we all see how this union operates - they defend racist murders and you know they defend to the core, to the point of making the victim’s look like the criminals.”

- **“An additional \$7.5 million in taxes per year for 15 years”** In the mediation that resulted in a total of \$114 million over 15 years, Richmond was represented by Jim Rogers, Jeff Ritterman (an RPA member at the time) and Tom Butt. McLaughlin’s only role was to vote affirmatively to accept the negotiated settlement.
- **“Promoted Community Choice Aggregation for utilities with 85% of homeowners and businesses now receiving greener and cheaper energy”** No question that McLaughlin was an ardent supporter of joining MCE Clean energy (formerly Marin Clean Energy and Marin Energy Authority), but she was not the one who introduced the idea. Tom Butt brought the proposal forward after hearing a presentation by the late Charles McGlashan, then chair of MCE, at the Yosemite Local Government Commission Conference.
- **“Increasing the Minimum Wage.”** McLaughlin was also an ardent supporter of increasing the minimum wage, but the ordinance was passed unanimously by the City Council, June 17, 2014, with Councilmembers Bates, Boozé, Butt, Myrick, Rogers, Vice Mayor Beckles, and Mayor McLaughlin. Only two of the supporters were RPA members.
- **“Passed the first rent control law in California in 30 years”** Neither the City Council nor McLaughlin “passed” the rent control ordinance that is now in place. It was the result of a successful ballot issue. In fact, the rent control ordinance that McLaughlin tried to pass previously was challenged in a successful petition drive, and she and the RPA chose to repeal it rather than fight for it.
- **“Challenged abusive bankers by promoting the idea of using the city eminent domain powers to keep homeowners in their homes during the foreclosure crisis”** This represented a major effort by McLaughlin that ultimately failed. She barely cobbled together a majority to keep the idea alive but could not achieve the supermajority required to actually implement it. She tried to persuade other cities to form a JPA that could overcome the supermajority impediment, but was unsuccessful. Ultimately, the rising value of homes after the recession made the plan economically untenable.

#### Other McLaughlin and RPA Myths

- **The Chevron Modernization Project and the Environmental and Community Investment Agreement (ECIA)**. On page 3, *Refinery Town* states, “A community mobilization led by environmental justice groups and the RPA helped the City win \$90 million in financial concessions from Chevron in return for approving a refinery modernization project that both critics and proponents hoped would improve safety and reduce pollution.” In fact, RPA City Council members did not vote in favor of the \$90 million settlement. It was passed narrowly with only four “yes” votes, including RPA enemies Nat Bates and Corky Booze.
- **The Mayor’s Power** On page 49, *Refinery Town* states “McLaughlin presided over a city...,” as if the mayor had real power. I know only too well that all the mayor presides over is City Council meetings; the city manager runs the City. On the same page, Early correctly recalls that “the mayor took credit for attracting one thousand new jobs,” but all that represented was the number of employees listed on business license applications. There is no evidence that the mayor or anyone else played a key role in creating new jobs. Also on page 49, Early notes, “Richmond did launch the Worker Cooperative Revolving Loan Fund (WCRLF) as a grant-funded stopgap measure and demonstration that ‘another world is possible,’” but the fund has been unable to launch a single sustainable cooperative.

### An Evolution – Not a Revolution

*Refinery Town* paints an inaccurate picture of the role the RPA and McLaughlin played in whatever successes Richmond has enjoyed over the last few years. The McLaughlin campaign for lieutenant governor makes those same

claims. Richmond's changes have been an incremental evolution in a continuum rather than a revolution led by the RPA and McLaughlin .

In the 1980s, George Livingston beat Republican Lavonne Nicholls in a mayor's race that turned on development of the southern shoreline. Nicholls, who was the last Republican to serve on the Richmond City Council, wanted more industry, and Livingston championed parks, housing and commerce. After the election, the City Council approved a new shoreline plan that envisioned what we have today. At the end of the 1980s, progressive Council member David MacDiarmid took on both Chevron and Darrell Reese and was rewarded by a nasty campaign that removed him from office.

In the early 1990s, Rosemary Corbin defeated incumbent Mayor George Livingston, who had subsequently become too chummy with Chevron interests. Like the RPA, Corbin took no corporate money, and was helped by an army of citizen volunteers. Chevron's flack was quoted on the front page of the paper the day after her election that she would be "bad for business." The homicide rate was reduced as dramatically during Corbin's term as in McLaughlin's term. After Richmond lost the progressive Chief Bill Lansdown, City Manager Isiah Turner hired Samuels, who was not committed to community policing, so the crime rate began to climb again. Corbin was also responsible for garbage rate regulation, for Richmond's recycling and hazardous waste disposal programs as well as advancing parks, open space, the Bay Trail and historic preservation. Corbin was extremely active with the US. Conference of Mayors where she secured many millions of dollars for Richmond because of contacts made in Washington.

In Irma Anderson's single term, she championed the public policy initiative that ultimately resulted in establishment of the Office of Neighborhood Safety.

Tom Butt has been fighting Chevron for 22 years, as have people like former Mayor Rosemary Corbin and former councilmembers Jim Rogers, and Tony Thurmond as well Jael Myrick. The truth is that the RPA joined the fight rather than starting it.

Historically, the "[Nat Bates for Mayor](#)" film released last year is very instructive about this evolution. For years, the African American vote in Richmond was manipulated by Chevron, industry, developers, the public safety unions and power brokers like Darrell Reese to control the City Council. You saw the last gasp of all that in "Nat Bates for Mayor." Richmond is now a more diverse city with a lot of new people in it who want good government and good quality of life and understand what it takes to get there.

Until Eduardo Martinez was elected in 2014, the RPA never had more than two seats on the City Council. Everything the McLaughlin and the RPA claim to have accomplished prior to January 2017 has depended on working with non-RPA allies, including Myrick and Butt. This should be a story about collaborations more than RPA leadership or McLaughlin's leadership.

As most people know, I have collaborated with the RPA much more than we have clashed. Our closest collaboration has been on environmental and sustainability issues, including joining MCE for renewable energy, banning chemical pesticide use by City workers and adopting a series of planning documents on the cutting edge of sustainability, beginning with the General Plan 2030 in 2012 and more recently the new Zoning Code, Climate Action Plan and Richmond bay Specific Plan. In 2008, Gayle McLaughlin joined with Jim Rogers, Tony Thurmond and me in unsuccessfully opposing Chevron's first run at their refinery modernization project, which was approved on a 5-4 vote. The Court eventually overturned the approval, and RPA City Council members joined with me to encourage Chevron to reapply with a project design and EIR that would address the shortcomings in the original submittal.

Just over two years ago, two of the three RPA City Council members, including McLaughlin, joined with me approve a new four-year contract with Bill Lindsay.

As I have pointed out many times, anything the RPA or McLaughlin has taken credit for is only because its members were able to collaborate with other non-RPA City Council members, or vice-versa. Up until now, Richmond politics has been a team sport.

## RPA Internal Power Struggle

Originally formed largely by older white lefty newcomers to Richmond who snapped up cheap foreclosed homes during the recession, the RPA moved a couple of years ago to burnish its image by recruiting diverse and younger members of its Steering Committee.

The result has been an internal schism between older and younger members over both methodology and policy, particularly evident in the bitterly split vote between Marilyn Langlois and Ada Recinos to replace Gayle McLaughlin.

The RPA continues to act more like a gang or a cult than a group of free thinkers. In the face of the schism, the founders struggle to enforce discipline. It appears that the old guard, largely old, white lefties and firebrands Andres Soto and Juan Reardon are gnashing their teeth as the RPA millennials begin to wander off the reservation.

With three of the five RPA City Council members voting against the RPA Steering Committee adopted policy on North Richmond Annexation, RPA Co-founder Juan Reardon exhorted his colleagues to enforce discipline in the ranks and threatened, "Councilmembers who explicitly go against the votes of the RPA SC [Steering Committee] and membership on key issues should not receive further electoral support from the organization or the activist members. The RPA is a membership organization. They are either with the RPA or not."

Reardon's definition of democracy is that which the RPA Steering Committee ordains, warning, "We make important decisions through a process that is very democratic, and we expect all members to follow these democratically made decisions. This expectation also applies to the RPA members who are in the City Council."

Reardon harked back to Jeff Ritterman, who also broke ranks with the RPA power structure, and ultimately decided to give up politics, possibly because of the immense pressure to toe the party line. Obviously referring to Ritterman, Reardon warned, "Some years ago, an RPA councilmember dismissed the RPA recommendations on key issues which were part of the core of the RPA values. This councilmember voted against the City employees' union, voted also to re-zone light industrial the North Richmond open shoreline, and voted to cut a deal with Chevron inferior to what we had fought for. This was wrong."

In February of 2012, another RPA co-founder, Andres Soto lectured Oakland progressives on wedge politics and recalled the struggle to make Jeff Ritterman "accountable:"

Define issue in the community that will create a wedge, between the Progressives and the other guys. And we call them the conservatives, even though they started adopting the language of "progressives", calling themselves progressives, but we continue to frame them as conservatives. It's not a rosy road all the way: Sometimes our own people disappoint us, and we're having right now an issue with city councilman Jeff Ritterman on how do we make him accountable. So these are some of the lessons that I think folks need to consider when you bring up progressive alliance, but in the end I think the model that we have shown in Richmond is this is how you change political paradigm in the community. <sup>7</sup>

Two months after Soto's comment, at the peak of his influence and effective work for Richmond, Councilman Ritterman announced he would not run again, and would largely disappear from Richmond politics. <sup>8</sup>

While the spats are burned in the public memory, those close to Ritterman say they belie the councilman's skill at consensus building. "He knows how to cut a deal, he can compromise, and I don't think he gets enough credit for that," Butt said.

Ritterman said he was never more conflicted than during and after the Chevron negotiations. It was his political allies who were most skeptical of the deal, he said. "I had to keep everyone, including the (Richmond Progressive Alliance), at arm's length during those secret negotiations," Ritterman said. "Some

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NogNNYwr...> starting at 07:15

<sup>8</sup> <http://richmondconfidential.org/2012/04/...> And <http://www.mercurynews.com/2012/12/14/ri...>

progressives, maybe most, were not in favor of a deal with Chevron, but I was not willing to risk bankruptcy, and I felt that if the deal was a good one, everyone would eventually embrace it as the practical solution.”<sup>9</sup>

Although Soto chastised Ritterman for playing a part in settling a Chevron tax dispute through mediation, RPA co-founder Gayle McLaughlin now lauds the settlement as one of her accomplishments: “...forced Chevron to pay on average an additional \$7.5 million in taxes per year for 15 years.”

Following is Juan Reardon’s email to RPA members in which he defines “democracy” as policy dictated by the RPA leadership.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Juan Reardon <[juanreardon@sbcglobal.net](mailto:juanreardon@sbcglobal.net)>

Date: Fri, Oct 20, 2017 at 10:59 AM

Subject: [rpa-sc-discussion] We need to build a better, more democratic RPA

To: RPA-SC-Discussion <[rpa-sc-discussion@googlegroups.com](mailto:rpa-sc-discussion@googlegroups.com)>

We need to build a better, more democratic RPA

Democracy has been an RPA key value since day one.

We created this organization because Chevron ran Richmond like a feudal lord. We created the RPA to be democratic and to defend and build democracy.

Over the years our organization has taken steps to expand our democratic nature. In recent years we became a membership organization and the general membership assembly is the ultimate decision making body. We also formalized bylaws and a steering committee elected directly and periodically by the members.

We make important decisions through a process that is very democratic, and we expect all members to follow these democratically made decisions. This expectation also applies to the RPA members who are in the City Council.

Having all members follow the democratically voted policies and recommendations makes the RPA a more democratic organization, and obviously a stronger one.

There are hundreds of issues that come up for a city council vote regularly. We expect the councilmembers to hear from all interested parties and vote on those items as they see best.

However, when it comes to matters of fundamental importance to the RPA, which are brought-up and voted on by the RPA Steering Committee and/or General Membership, we expect the RPA councilmembers to adhere to the recommendations and preferences of the RPA.

Some years ago, an RPA councilmember dismissed the RPA recommendations on key issues which were part of the core of the RPA values. This councilmember voted against the City employees’ union, voted also to re-zone light industrial the North Richmond open shoreline, and voted to cut a deal with Chevron inferior to what we had fought for. This was wrong.

Following the RPA democratically voted recommendations only when it is not inconvenient, or when friends or other advisors are not opposing them, is a serious problem. It damages and weakens the resolve of RPA activists when they see that their democratically discussed and voted positions are dismissed by those we elected into office.

Not one RPA councilmember can say that they got into office by themselves. It was the collective efforts of the RPA who put them there.

We need to build deeper into our collective thinking the understanding that a democratic progressive movement needs democratic loyalty to advance its goals.

We will always have differences of opinion, but in the key junctures and issues all members of the organization must follow the decision arrived by the democratic process.

The RPA cannot do much immediately when an RPA councilmember chooses to ignore the democratically voted recommendations on key issues and go on their own way.

Nevertheless, all potential RPA candidates must be made aware during their candidacy exploration that this is the RPA expectation, and that the RPA as an organization, and the RPA members as individual activists, will

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<sup>9</sup> <http://richmondconfidential.org/2012/12/...>

take into account how this expectation was fulfilled, when subsequent endorsement and campaign processes come up.

Councilmembers who explicitly go against the votes of the RPA SC and membership on key issues should not receive further electoral support from the organization or the activist members. The RPA is a membership organization. They are either with the RPA or not.

If this common-sense understanding has not been clear to all RPA members till now, it is time that it becomes clear, so that in the future we avoid tragic situations like the one mentioned of our former RPA councilmember years ago, and other situations which may come to mind.

All the 2018 city council candidates must be made clearly aware of this expectation, and of the consequences of not fulfilling it.

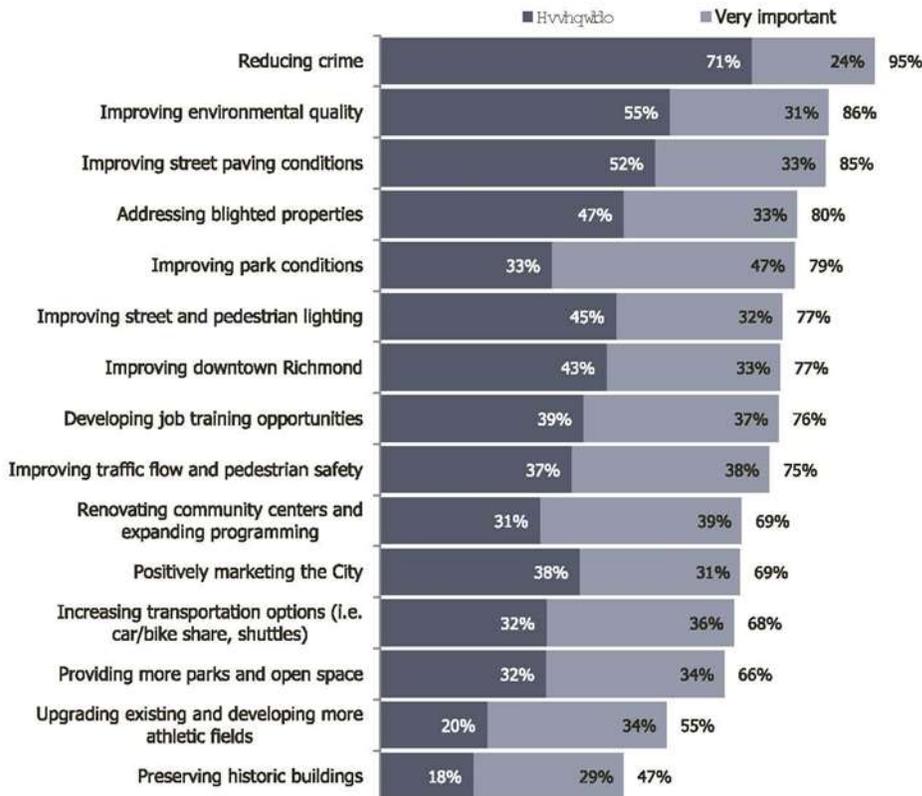
The RPA cannot be an organization used to get into office and ignored and dismissed afterwards.

Juan Reardon  
 Co-founder of the RPA  
 14 year member  
 SC member  
 Chair of the RPA Outreach Team

### The Election of 2018

The supermajority of RPA members on the City Council will most certainly be challenged in 2018.

Figure 7: Importance of City Issues  
*How important, if at all, are the following issues for the City to address within the next two years?*



Source: <http://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/44214>

The RPA has pursued a policy platform that increasingly departs from the issues most important to residents based on the biannual National Citizens Survey. Top concerns in the 2017 survey were reducing crime, improving environmental quality, improving street paving conditions, addressing blighted properties, improving park conditions, improving street and pedestrian lighting, improving downtown Richmond, developing job training opportunities, improving traffic flow and pedestrian safety, and so on – all either economic concerns or traditional municipal functions.

The RPA is now focused almost exclusively on populist social justice issues, many of which are outside the purview of local government. With reducing crime as the number one priority of residents, the RPA continues to pursue an anti-police posture that seemingly would not play well politically – but we shall see. Will the electorate go for substance or for ideology?

## How did my Wishes and Predictions for 2017 Turn Out?

I got 7 out of 10, perhaps my best ever.

### 1. Budget

- **Prediction:** The Budget process will be contentious as revenue falls several million dollars short of projected expenditures, and the RPA will double down on their 2016 plan to drastically cut compensation of everyone but SEIU members. Senior staff members will look for jobs elsewhere.
- **How did it turn out?** We adopted a balanced budget with little contention, substantially due to rising tax revenue.

### 2. Richmond Fair Rent, Just Cause for Eviction, and Homeowner Protection Ordinance

- **Prediction:** Implementation of the Richmond Fair Rent, Just Cause for Eviction and Homeowner Protection Ordinance will be rocky. Parts of it will be successfully challenged in court. Many tenants will be disappointed that they are not covered by the rent control provisions or that their evictions have, in fact, been just. Everyone will be confused.
- **How did it turn out?** Pretty much as I predicted, except for court challenges.

### 3. Crime

- **Wish:** The City's crime rate, particularly homicides, will go back down.
- **How did it turn out?** The homicide rate dropped by 37.5 percent, and after an early uptick, the overall rate started to decline.

### 4. Community Survey

- **Prediction:** The semiannual Community Survey will report continued confidence in the direction the City is going.
- **How did it turn out?** The trend continued positive.

### 5. Chevron

- **Prediction:** The City of Richmond litigation against Chevron will not be settled in 2017.
- **How did it turn out?** There was no settlement.

### 6. Point Molate

- **Prediction:** There will be a judgment rendered in the Point Molate litigation. The City will prevail, but the future will remain contentious.
- **How did it turn out?** There was no settlement.

## 7. Terminal 1

- **Prediction:** The expected \$10 million windfall from sale of Terminal 1 will not occur as the financier fails to perform.
- **How did it turn out?** The windfall did not occur, primarily because of lagging entitlements.

## 8. City Council

- **Prediction:** At least one City Council member will resign in 2017.
- **How did it turn out?** Gayle McLaughlin resigned in July.

## 9. Richmond Field Station

- **Prediction:** Following demise of the Global Campus vision, the University of California will proceed to plan for campus expansion, including faculty housing, UCSF-affiliated facilities and public-private partnerships for R&D facilities.
- **How did it turn out?** There was no progress.

## 10. Branding and Marketing Plan

- **Prediction:** Richmond will have a Branding and Marketing Plan.
- **How did it turn out?** The Branding and Marketing Plan was completed in August.

## Wishes and Predictions for 2018

### 1. North Richmond

- **Prediction:** North Richmond will be annexed to Richmond, but not without a fight

### 2. Richmond Progressive Alliance

- **Prediction:** The RPA will take a hit in the November 2018 elections.

### 3. Richmond Kids First Initiative

- **Prediction:** The Kids First Initiative will fail in the June 2018 election.

### 4. Richmond Main Post Office

- **Prediction:** the Richmond Main Post Office will be sold for less than the City of Richmond offered, and it will be turned into a Contract Postal Unit by a private investor.

### 5. Chevron

- **Prediction:** The City of Richmond litigation against Chevron related to the 2012 fire will be settled in 2018.

### 6. Point Molate

- **Prediction:** The City of Richmond and Upstream will settle their ongoing litigation in 2018.

### 7. Terminal 1

- **Prediction:** The expected \$10 million windfall from sale of Terminal 1 will finally occur in 2018.

### 8. Historic Shipyard 3 Cafeteria

- **Prediction:** The building will be leased, and rehabilitation will begin..

### 9. Nystrom School

- **Prediction:** Nystrom School will be officially added to the list of buildings making up Rosie the Riveter WWII National Historical Park.

### 10. Richmond Visitor Center

- **Prediction:** The building originally built as a “transit center” at the Richmond BART station will become the “Richmond Visitor Center” jointly operated by the [Richmond Main Street Initiative](#) and [Visit RichmondCA](#).



*Happy New Year!*

*Tom Butt*