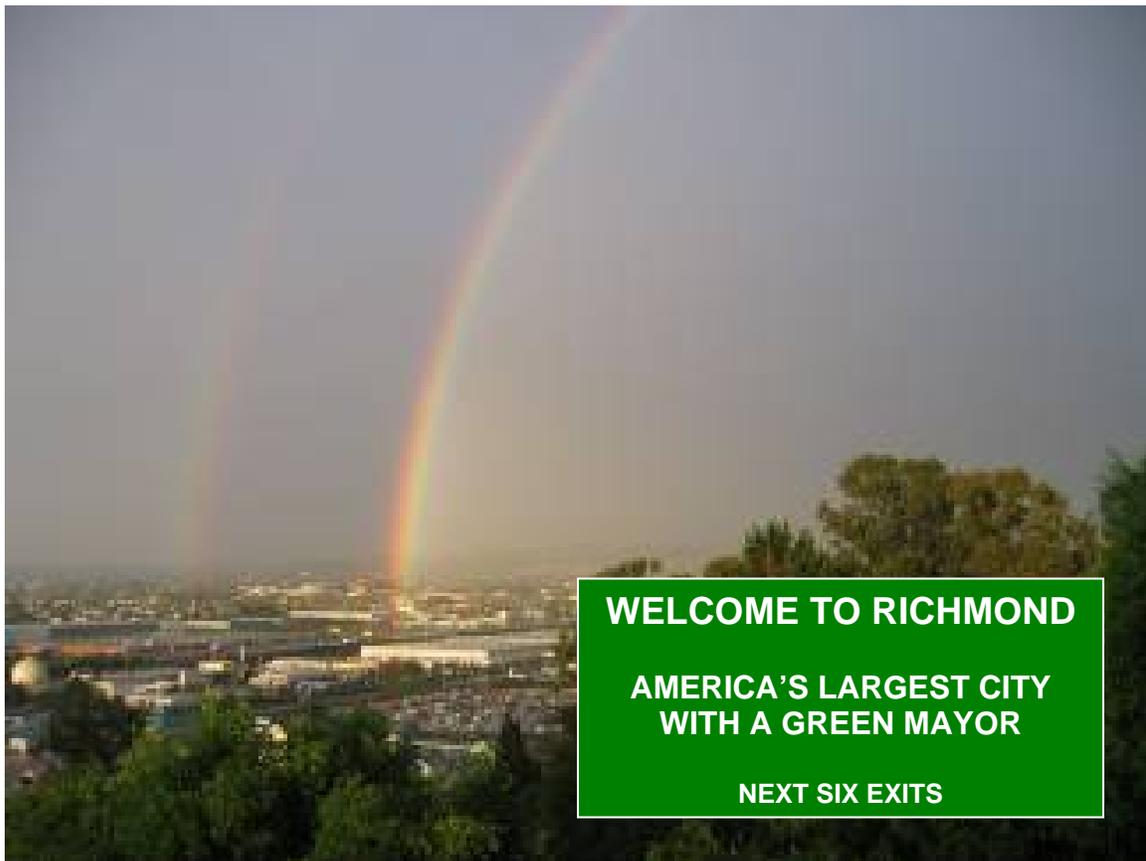

Richmond, California
Richmond Will be Heaven in 2007?



2006 Year End Review

Tom Butt, Richmond City Council Member
January 1, 2007

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Introduction

For several years, I have prepared detailed year-end evaluations 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. Since 2002, I have invited public participation, and I have shared the results on my E-FORUM.

- At the end of 2002, I shared one of these priorities on the E-FORUM in [New Year's Resolution - A Full Court Press on Blight](#), January 3, 2003.
- Following 2003, 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.
- At the beginning of 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.
- At the beginning of 2006 was [What Can We Fix in 2006?](#), January 1, 2006.

I recommend you take a look at these previous E-Forums, and 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 memory a year later.

What follows is not a scientific poll or survey by any standard. Some of it reflects my personal opinions, and some of it reflects the opinions of people who live or do business in Richmond, including some City employees. The only public input quoted herein is from readers of the E-FORUM, which is a self-limiting sample. *Comments from E-FORUM readers are in quotation marks and italics to distinguish them from my own.*

As before, I have censored almost nothing, which will surely offend some people. However, I value my reputation as an objective and equal opportunity critic, and I welcome responses, comments, arguments and debates. I especially solicit corrections.

Although I made the same appeal this year as previously, the volume and intensity of responses continues to subside. I hope this is due to a higher level of optimism and a lower level of frustration among City employees and residents. I, too, am less cynical about Richmond government than I have been in years. On the other hand, this reduced response may be simply because people are getting tired of complaining without results or are becoming complacent..

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 take time to subscribe. See [Tombutt.com Logs Over Half a Million Hits in 2006](#), November 5, 2006, and [Contra Costa Times Gives E-Forum a Boost](#), November 12, 2006.

Top Three Richmond Issues of 2006

No. 1 – Election 2007 – A Sea Change in Richmond Politics?

Not since the 1960s, when hippie City Councilman David Pierce served for a year as Richmond's rotating mayor, has this City been so jolted politically. (Last time I saw David was only last summer; he was

standing naked on a gravel bar of the Eel River at a music festival.) Despite a Herculean effort by the Richmond commercial-industrial establishment, Green Party member and two-year Councilmember Gayle McLaughlin emerged a winner in a cliffhanger election. Although the media now touts Richmond as the largest American city with a Green Party mayor, the real story is how she, as an individual, prevailed over a heavily financed and entrenched power structure, using a minimally financed grass roots campaign.

Richmond has always been a liberal city, but liberal meant support of labor, civil rights and social equity. It did not include taking on the corporate power structure, empowering neighborhoods, cleaning the air, saving the shoreline or embracing environmental justice.

In trying to defeat McLaughlin, Chevron & Co, tried for a twofer, clogging mailboxes with hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of campaign mailers connecting McLaughlin with Measure T. In what may have been a Pyrrhic victory for Chevron, Measure T went down, but McLaughlin prevailed. Chevron finally got the message that there is a revolt on the plantation, and with \$1 billion of construction requiring a revised conditional use permit coming up (see [Chevron and General Chemical Line Up for Expansion Projects](#), October 1, 2006), they are contemplating some serious fence mending.

Buckle up and hang on for an interesting ride.

No. 2 – Most Dangerous City in California -Again

This year's homicides climbed to 42, two more than 2005 and higher than any year since 1994 when there were 52 homicides. There were 40 homicides in 2005, 35 homicides in 2004 and 38 homicides in 2003.

In November of 2005, the City Council passed Resolution 161-05, which authorized implementing a violence prevention coordinator. In July of 2006, the City Council approved a contract with The Mentoring Center to assist in establishing the Office of Violence Prevention. Anticipating a coordinated and circumspect violence prevention effort, the City Council struggled with attempts by various organizations to short circuit the process obtain funding for isolated programs touted as violence preventatives (see. [City Council Reverts To Fiscally Irresponsible Behavior #1](#), March 25, 2006).

With continuing high homicide rates, the tent city movement caught the imagination of the press and thrust Richmond into an unwelcome national limelight as the Murder Capital of California.

Unfortunately, the Mentoring Center seems to have produced little work product other than a list of meetings attended. This has been a very disappointing endeavor with lots of churning and no results. I don't know anyone who feels this has been productive, and we have already wasted a year.

The only good news seems to be that the clearance rate for homicides appears to be up due to better community cooperation with police, and there is early evidence that the non-homicide crime rate may have actually fallen during 2006 ([Looking for Some Good News About Richmond Crime?](#) December 18, 2006).

No 3 – Rebirth of the Civic Center

Nearly 15 years after my firm, Interactive Resources, first evaluated the Civic Center buildings and found them at risk during a seismic event (before I was on the City Council), the first substantive steps are being taken to reclaim Richmond's 56-year old Civic Center. A ceremonial groundbreaking is planned for January 5, 2005.

In the latest iteration of two steps back and one step forward, the City Council voted in December 2006 to award a \$10.5 million contract for design of Phase 1, which includes rehabilitation of the City Hall, the Hall of Justice, parts of the Auditorium and Arts Center, and the plaza. The police will be relocated to rental quarters at Marina Bay indefinitely. Although design of a new Hall of Justice will proceed, construction is on hold pending evaluation of funding. See [Civic Center Design Process Sparks Controversy](#), July 10, 2006, [Update On Civic Center Design](#), August 3, 2006, [Connect the Dots](#), October

20, 2006, [New Hall of Justice on the Ropes Due to Fund Shortage](#), November 22, 2006, and [City Council Launches Civic Center Project on a Wing and a Prayer](#), December 23, 2006.

Richmond Advances and Stumbles in 2006

Tom Butt Nominations for 2006 Advances

A year ago, I wrote, “As a general observation, I sense that there has been a subtle but fundamental change in Richmond politics during 2005, with the traditional bases of power and money losing clout. Issues have become more important than loyalties, votes more important than money and the City’s health more important than that of special interests. In my book, this is progress.” I believe this trend continues.

My choice for the list of the best for the City of Richmond in 2006 includes the following, not in any particular order:

- The City Council once again adopted a balanced budget for FY 2006-2007 that included adequate funds for rebuilding reserves.
- Chief Magnus took definitive steps to reorganize the Police Department for real community policing. See [Get to Know your Beat Cop - New Richmond PD Organization and Contact Info](#), August 10, 2006.
- With BNSF kicking and screaming all the way, the City of Richmond has been able to establish two-thirds of the Quiet Zones it originally targeted. However, BNSF continues to throw up every possible roadblock and defy compliance at every turn. See [Federal Railroad Administration and BNSF Conspire to Thwart Quiet Zones](#), May 21, 2006, [West One Quiet Zone Debuts Today](#), July 15, 2006, [Railroad Quiet Zones Come to Marina Bay](#), August 17, 2006, [City Council Gets Tough on Railroads](#), November 22, 2006, [Early Christmas Present for Point Richmond - Peace and Quiet](#), December 2, 2006, [Amended Notice of Establishment of West Two Quiet Zone](#), December 19, 2006 and [Railroad Draws a Line in the Sand Over West 2 Quiet Zone](#), December 28, 2006.
- The City and County reestablished joint fire service in El Sobrante. See [They Fiddle While El Sobrante Burns](#), January 14, 2006, [Grand Jury Slams City and County For Impasse](#), June 9, 2006, [Immediate Resumption of Automatic Aid in El Sobrante](#), June 14, 2006, and [Council Reinstates Automatic Aid - Sort Of](#), June 22, 2006.
- The process of creating a new [general plan](#) for Richmond began this year and continues in full swing. A good sign that planning is going the right direction appeared when the Council of Industries pushed the panic button and claimed, “The anti-business, anti-development, land preservation comments outweigh recommendations for economic and industrial development, business & port expansion, and growth...” See [Parks? Richmond Prefers Industry](#), October 5, 2006.
- The City finally came to grips with its overburdened and sometimes crumbling sewage collection system, including adopting an FOG (Fats, Oils and Grease) ordinance, a lateral inspection ordinance and a rate increase. See [Flushing it Down the Richmond Way](#), January 30, 2006, [The High Cost of Old Sewers](#), February 19, 2006, [CCT Editorial Calls On Richmond To Deal With Sewers](#), March 9, 2006, [The Smell of Sewage in the Morning](#), March 16, 2006, and [Sewer Rate Increase Unrelated to Treatment Plan](#), June 3, 2006.
- Progress continued on Richmond’s portion of the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Richmond Greenway. A new organization, mirroring TRAC and called FORG (Friends of the Richmond Greenway) has formed and is already making significant progress as an advocacy and support group. See [Bay Trail Update](#), February 8, 2006, [Richmond Greenway on Path to Completion](#), February 12, 2006, [Richmond Greenway Approaches Full Funding](#), February 17, 2006, [Richmond Greenway Kickoff Community Meeting](#), March 29, 2006, [Richmond Greenway Groundbreaking](#), May 11, 2006, [More On Greenway Groundbreaking](#), May 23, 2006,

[Richmond Greenway Breaks New Ground](#), May 27, 2006, and [The Greenwaying of Richmond](#), August 12, 2006.

- The Richmond Police Department adopted a police operations procedure to deal with encounters with dogs on private property. See [Richmond a Little Bit Less Dangerous for Dogs](#), February 8, 2006 and [That Doggone Blu Just Won't Go Away](#), February 17, 2006.
- Richmond seems to have dodged a property tax reduction attempt by Chevron. See [Tax Break For Chevron May Hit Home](#), March 7, 2006, [Refinery Tax Dispute Heats Up](#), March 13, 2006, [State Board of Equalization Board Member Bill Leonard Wants to Lower Taxes on Oil Refineries](#), March 19, 2006, [Refinery Property Tax reduction Impact Quantified](#), April 10, 2006, [Contra Costa Times Editorializes Proposed Refinery Tax Cuts](#), April 17, 2006, [Refineries Lose One](#), June 28, 2006, and [Richmond May Dodge Bullet on Chevron Property Tax Assessment Reduction](#), September 28, 2006.
- East Bay Regional Parks District defied the Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency and the Richmond City Council by stepping up to purchase and preserve the Breuner Marsh. See [EBRPD Moves In On Breuner Property](#), March 8, 2006.
- It was a big year for preserving Richmond's rich history.
 1. [Preserve America Community](#): Richmond was designated a Preserve America Community. See [Richmond Capitalizes on Its History](#), November 15, 2006.
 2. [Ford Assembly Building](#): My experience with this building goes back to 1984 when, at the request of Richmond Museum President Lois Boyle, my firm completed a successful pro-bono National Register application. Once the building was listed on the National Register, there were at least modest impediments to its demolition, which many clambered for over the years, especially after it was heavily damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Today, it is a real success story, essentially completed, almost fully occupied and designated as the location of the future visitor center for Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park. See [Rehabilitated Ford Building Ready To Go](#), March 26, 2006, [NY Times Features Richmond's Ford Assembly Plant Rehab Project](#), June 7, 2006, and [Richmond Lauded As An Icon Of Historic Preservation As An Engine Of Economic Development](#), August 6, 2006.
 3. [Preservation Grants](#): Richmond took home the Triple Crown with over \$6 million in grants for the Plunge, the Winters Building and the Maritime Child Care Center. Later in the year two of these three projects won an additional \$80,000 following an Internet popularity contest sponsored by American Express and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. See [Richmond Scores Triple Crown in CCHE Competition](#), April 28, 2006, [Preservation Open House at Maritime Child Care Center](#), October 11, 2006, and [Wartime Children's Art Captivates Visitors at Maritime Center Open House](#), October 15, 2006.
 4. [Trainmaster Building](#): The former Santa Fe Reading Room and the oldest remaining building from the railroad terminal that started Richmond was successfully rehabilitated after a 15-year fight. The non-profit Point Richmond Gateway, LLC., which fronted the funds and organized volunteers, is expected to announce a high profile new tenant for the building, one of Richmond's oldest businesses, in 2007. See [Historic Railroad Building Nears Completion](#), May 11, 2006.
 5. [East Brother Light Station](#) continues to bring positive attention and accolades. See [Richmond's East Brother Named "Best on the Bay."](#), September 08, 2006, [San Francisco Chronicle Recommends a Night in Richmond at East Brother](#), September 17, 2006, and [Another Richmond Historical Landmark in Internet Vote Competition](#), October 11, 2006.
 6. [Freeway Signs](#): The first of 24 freeway signs directing drivers to Richmond's historic resources were erected in December. See [First of Freeway Historic Richmond Signs Erected](#), December 25, 2006.
 7. [Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park](#) continued to develop. See [Rosie the Riveter Webstore Goes Live](#), May 16, 2006, [D-Day Tribute To Rosies Features Richmond National Park](#), June 9, 2006, [Help Make Macdonald Avenue History Come To Life](#), August 1, 2006, [Bringing back 'Memories of Macdonald'](#) August 10, 2006, [Richmond's National Park is a Finalist In Award for Municipal Excellence](#), September

06, 2006, [Contra Costa Times Editorial Lauds Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park](#), September 08, 2006, [Explore Macdonald Avenue and Relive Exciting History](#), September 08, 2006, [The National Park Service needs your help in shaping the visitor experience at Rosie the Riveter/World War II NHP](#), October 2, 2006, [Final "Memories of Macdonald" Tour](#), October 6, 2006, [WCCUSD Joins in Funding Match for Maritime Center for Working Families](#), October 22, 2006, [Help Plan Your National Park](#), October 28, 2006, [Two For The History Book](#), October 29, 2006, [Two for Veterans Day](#), November 5, 2006, [Red Oak Victory Featured on Veterans Day NPR All Things Considered](#), November 12, 2006, [New Rosie the Riveter Apparel Features Famous Richmond Landmarks](#), December 3, 2006, [Richmond's National Park Featured at National League of Cities](#), December 9, 2006, [Nation's Mayors Visit Rosie Exhibit](#), December 12, 2006, and [Saving the Historical Riggers Loft](#), December 16, 2006.

- The Point Richmond Arts and Music Festival Continues to grow. See [Grand Finale of Point Richmond Arts and Music Festival This Saturday](#) September 07, 2006.
- There appears to be movement on enforcing the Fence Ordinance. See [City Moves On Fence Ordinance Enforcement](#), June 3, 2006.

Tom Butt Nominations for 2006 Stumbles

My nominations for worst stumbles of the City of Richmond for 2006 include the following, not in any particular order:

- In a Bay Area-wide survey, Richmond was found to have the worst urban roads and the second worst overall. See [Richmond Has Second Worst Roads in Bay Area](#), October 18, 2006, and [Streetwise and \\$ Foolish?](#) December 10, 2006.
- Richmond failed to implement an anti-violence program and continued to reinforce its reputation as the Murder Capital of California.
- Chevron changed the method it had always selected to calculate its utility user tax, perhaps dropping \$4 million out of the projected general fund revenues. However, the City will retain an investigator to determine if Chevron is playing this straight. Hopefully, the City will see a reversal of fortunes. See [Chevron and Richmond Roll The Dice Over Utility User Tax](#), July 5, 2006, [Chevron Sticks it to Richmond Once Again, Then Twists the Knife](#), September 08, 2006, [Chevron Sics Attorneys on Richmond](#), September 20, 2006, and [Chronicle's Chip Johnson Pummels Chevron, Mayor Anderson](#), September 26, 2006.
- City staff wasted a third of a year and a lot of credibility pushing for a feasibility study for a north shoreline container port, which was an absurd idea from the outset. [City of Richmond Staff Dreams of Giant Container Port On North Shoreline](#), July 8, 2006, [City Council Drools Over Prospect Of Gigantic Container Port](#), July 26, 2006, [City Manager Cautiously Optimistic About Major Container Port](#), August 13, 2006, [Readers Respond to Container Port Prospect](#), August 17, 2006, [Port Priority Area at Oakland Army Base Envisioned for Auto Malls and Hotels](#), August 27, 2006, [Richmond Spin Machine Has Bay Area Media Pumping Up Container Port](#), August 21, 2006, [BCDC Weighs in on Container Port Fiasco](#), August 28, 2006, [Container Port Presentation by Chevron](#), August 28, 2006, [San Francisco Bay Joint Venture Weighs in on Container Port](#), September 07, 2006, [Experts Debunk Economic Prospects of Proposed Container Terminal](#), September 10, 2006, [Richmond Chamber of Commerce Fronts for Chevron, Supports Port Study, Slams Butt and McLaughlin](#), September 16, 2006, [Wildcat Marsh Container Port to be Discussed Tonight](#), September 19, 2006, [Tom Butt is Anti-Port?](#) September 21, 2006, [The Three Stooges Make a Richmond Appearance](#), September 21, 2006, [Response from Copouncilmember Viramontes](#), September 22, 2006, [Councilmember Rogers Responds to Councilmember Viramontes on Container Port Issue](#), September 24, 2006, [JP Morgan Abandons Container Port Concept \(See City Manager's](#)

[Weekly Report](#)), October 21, 2006, and [We're From JP Morgan and We're Here to Help You](#), October 27, 2006.

- Measure T, which would have raised additional revenue painlessly, went down to defeat after a huge and expensive campaign against it by Richmond's commercial-industrial complex. See [Revised Business License Tax](#), July 16, 2006, [Council of Industries Pimps for Chevron Anti-Measure T Fight](#), October 19, 2006, [Chevron Opposes Richmond Measure T While Raking in Highest Profits in History](#), October 28, 2006, [City Politics and Candidates Divided by Chevron Support](#), October 29, 2006, [Waning Campaign Thoughts](#), November 1, 2006, and [Going to the Well Too Often?](#) November 4, 2006.
- Pandering to large developers, particularly Toll Brothers, continued to be led by the Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency, which considers developers as its constituency, not the residents of Richmond. See [Toll Brothers Tells Richmond To Take Its Trail and Stick It](#), July 22, 2006, [Of HOS and EIRS](#), August 3, 2006, [More On Terminal 1 EIR Fraud](#), August 6, 2006, [Richmond Policies, CEQA Violations and Housing Recession May Doom Toll project](#), August 27, 2006, [Planning Commission Rejects Point Richmond Shores EIR](#), September 08, 2006, and [Toll Brothers Must Be Smiling](#), November 15, 2006.
- Complaints by Police Department brass tainted an otherwise upbeat community assessment of Chief Magnus. See [Press Not Impressed with Police Complaints](#), December 20, 2006.

E-FORUM Reader Nominations for 2006 Advances

- *The police have been doing a superb job in my parts of Richmond. They deserve the credit for the drop in the crime rate, along with you and others involved in the city government who have been working to improve the situation.*
- *Its not some statistical fluke, there is a genuine, perceptible improvement in the areas of Richmond I see regularly.*
- *Communication by email and via the internet to report crimes to the police seems to work very well. We might be on the leading edge of this matter, I don't know if this is being done in other parts of the country. Could be the solution to the national crime problem.*

E-FORUM Reader Nominations for 2006 Stumbles

- *Tom, what I've noticed is that the streets get 'fixed' and then about 6-10 mos. later those spots are worse than before. How about getting someone to actually fix the streets! I know it's a novel concept. I just thought I'd ask.*
- *Traffic - the condition of the road - and drivers' speed on Carlson Blvd, however, have become monstrous! I know EXACTLY where El Cerrito ends, and Richmond begins - by the numerous potholes. Patching the potholes do NOTHING! They are filled and 2 days later, there are the holes again. To make matters worse, the designated speed in EC is 30, but get into Richmond, at it immediately becomes 35MPH. With the condition of Carlson (particularly between Huntington Ave and the #80 overpass) the speed should be reduced (I either have to brake to go OVER the potholes, or swerve to avoid them). Most autos go OVER the 35MPH limit, because they're intent on climbing onto the I-80 freeway access ramp. Makes entry to Carlson Blvd VERY DANGEROUS for drivers who enter Carlson from Tehama (just before the freeway ramp). Autos coming from EC, shoot out of a blind turn (to the left) and many drivers (going toward EC on Carlson) don't use their * * * turn signals to indicate they want to turn onto Tehama.*
- *With some 124 new rental units in EC recently completed, there will be some 250 more autos - many of them using Tehama as a short-cut to the Freeways (80 & 580). Though not recent, we've had one death of a resident who used Tehama as her access to Carlson Blvd. I just believe this situation is ripe for another disaster! I invite you to drive over the hill between Carlson Blvd and SPA. It aint easy!*
- *A new problem I have just become aware of in the last few weeks is homeowners renting out their houses to numerous young males, some of them troublemakers. We have a house across the street that resembles a frat house now, with young males coming and going at all hours of the day and*

night, and the people staying at the house have more vehicles than the property has off-street parking for. In addition some of the renters are hostile troublemakers who are destroying the character of the neighborhood. I'm not sure of the legality of what is going on over there, just pointing out a potential problem for the future if such renting out of houses to numerous tenants becomes a more prevalent practice.

- *Even before I read a word of what you have written, here is my pet peeve. Where is the \$\$\$\$ logic in moving from the old city call, doing nothing about the building for 2 or more years, renting a "NEW" place to do business for \$\$\$\$ then finally, the coup de gras, planning to move the police facilities temporarily for \$\$\$\$ while emptying the till to pay for all this? Moving to Texas, soon, don't look too bad, now. Please keep me on your mailing list. It will be interesting reading to see what is going on in the city where I have lived for over 50 years.*

Development Projects During 2006

E-FORUM Reader Nominations for Best 2006 Development Projects

- There were none this year.

E-FORUM Reader Nominations for Worst 2006 Development Projects

- There were none this year.

Organizations in 2006

E-FORUM Reader Nominations for Best 2006 Organizations

- *Organizations that have made Richmond a better place: NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS Lord help us if we did not come together to fight for a better Richmond!*

Tom Butt Nominations for Best 2006 Organizations

This year, I would like to recognize all the grass roots organizations that work so hard, and often effectively, to save Richmond from the devious plans and projects foisted on the public by City Council, the Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency, developers and the captains of industry, and to advocate for better land planning and a better quality of life. The following list is not exhaustive but is a good example of people who are out there doing the right thing.

- [Concerned Citizens of Point Richmond](#)
- [San Francisco Bay Joint Venture](#)
- [Trails for Richmond Action Committee](#)
- North Richmond Shoreline Open Space Alliance
- [Richmond Environmental Defense Fund](#)
- [Friends of Baxter Creek](#)
- [Urban Creeks Council](#)
- [Solar Richmond](#)
- West County Toxics Coalition
- [Baykeeper](#)
- [The Watershed Project](#)
- [Canyon Park friends of Open Space](#)
- [Bay Area Residents for Responsible Development](#)

- [Communities for a Better Environment](#)

City Employees

Once again, E-FORUM readers have toned down both the tone and quantity of criticism. I only got three this year.

City Employees Nominated by E-FORUM Readers for Roses

- *Kudos goes to the **head arborist** - I unfortunately have misplaced his business card. I first saw him when he was out on my block doing something for a neighbor. At the end of his job, I called him - to discuss my worries re the two trees I'd planted in the parking strip. Just really to get his advice as to how I might proceed. He informed me I should call his office - informing me that he was responsible for seeing the trees in the parking strips are regularly pruned (a fact I'd forgotten). He came out and trimmed them beautifully - and earlier this year, when we had a high wind and a large branch fell onto the sidewalk, he came out immediately to remove it - and further pruned that one tree so no other incidents might occur! I thought to myself, if ONLY ALL the departments in the City worked in such a coordinated manner!*
- *Sergeant **Dave Harris** and his crew have done a superb job cleaning up the crime problems in Point Richmond.*
- ***Willie Haywood** did an excellent job cleaning up the graffiti in the Point Richmond tunnel.*

City Employees Nominated by E-FORUM Readers for Garlic

I only received one nomination this year, and although I agree with it, I decided not to print it, but it will be passed on to the appropriate department head.

Roses from Tom Butt for City Employees

Like E-Forum readers I suppose, I am growing generally complacent about City staff. For the most part, I find our staff to be hard working, responsive and effective.

One of the most notable changes around City Hall is a lot less buck passing than there used to be. It is so refreshing to hear City staff acknowledge a problem, take responsibility for it and actually do something about it.

I appreciate the direction that Planning Director **Richard Mitchell** continues to take in trying to improve the quality of Richmond's built environment, and I am pleased with the effort of Planners **Lina Valesco** and **Hector Rojas** to continue support of the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee, including resubmittal of Richmond's application to become a Certified Local Government.

Darren Monahan and **Willie Haywood** and their **respective staff** continue to improve code enforcement and abatement, including effective use of COR Connect.

Although some of us were a little frustrated at the pace of Quiet Zone implementation earlier in the year, we applauded the year-end tenacity of assistant City Attorney **Carlos "Pit Bull" Privat** as he went mano a mano with BNSF officials.

Garlic from Tom Butt for City Employees

In the spirit of a new beginning, no garlic will be awarded this year.

City Departments, Policies and Services

City Departments, Policies and Services Nominated by E-FORUM Readers for Roses

Police

- *“The police have been doing a superb job in my part Richmond. They deserve the credit for the drop in the crime rate, along with you and others involved in the city government who have been working to improve the situation.”*
- *“Communication by email and via the internet to report crimes to the police seems to work very well. We might be on the leading edge of this matter, I don't know if this is being done in other parts of the country. Could be the solution to the national crime problem.”*

Tom Butt E-FORUM

- *“Councilmember Butt: I also want to thank you ever so much for your continuing tenaciousness in not JUST bird-dogging important issues that seemingly have "fallen thru the cracks," but then REGULARLY updating the information to members of the Richmond community. During my lifetime I've lived in a number of cities - no-one in ANY city capacity has ever communicated regularly with its constituency (other than a flyer or two during the traditional, pre-voting frenzy). Your columns are obviously thoroughly researched and the information you convey - though sometimes VERY unsettling, is (I believe) vital for an informed community! Here's to a better, more productive Richmond in 2007!”*
- *“And of course, it goes without saying, that our Councilman Tom Butt is the most valuable member of all in our city government, for example by facilitating the exchange of information via your E-forum, among numerous other valuable services he provides to his grateful constituents!”*

City Departments, Policies and Services Nominated by E-FORUM Readers for Garlic

Planning Department

- *“Worst City of Richmond Department: PLANNING DEPARTMENT.”*
- *“Planning Dept staff (name deleted) submitted to the Design Review Board a review of my neighbor's proposed addition to home. The review contained 5 errors of fact. Slipshod work at best”*
- *“Requested tape of a Design & Review Board's meeting and paid \$25 for same. Was sent an inaudible tape. Asked for audible tape. Received new tape with tape twisted.”*

Police Department

- *“POLICE DEPARTMENT. Has not addressed gun violence in the City. First priority, MOLD?”*

City Council

- *“My dismay is a general malaise I keep hearing that basically goes ‘The council never listens and just does whatever they want to do’ Most recently this is, of course, shoving a police presence down the throats of Marina Bay residents without even giving us a chance to respond. Before that the overpass. No amount of complaint or reasoning seemed to stall Jim Rogers’ determination to have an overpass running by our properties so he could get his son to school on time. The last time I spoke with him, he told me it was a done deal and it would be best if I just convinced my neighbors to fight for an underpass. And for most of us in Bayfront and for our future neighbors at Pulte, we don't want either. We truly feel that either would cause a decline in our property values*

and decrease our quality of life. Of course, Jim's kid would get to school on time. That's what I think is the biggest problem from our neck of the woods - City Council doesn't listen".

2007 Predictions from E-FORUM Readers

There were none.

How did E-FORUM Readers 2006 Predictions turn out?

There were only three, but all of them saw progress if not fulfillment:

- *"I sincerely hope our wonderful library is opened for more hours in 2006."* **Library hours were extended in 2006.**
- *"The problem experienced by a number of blocks in the city of street-sweeping & garbage pickup occurring on the same day will continue unresolved in 2006, 2007, & beyond."* **There were fewer problems in 2006.**
- *"I predict a year in which the City of Richmond and the City of El Cerrito actually COOPERATE and form a redevelopment district on Richmond's southern end of San Pablo Ave, the southern gate to Richmond, from Portola to Central Ave., to get rid of blighted businesses along the area and encourage smart development of multi storied buildings with shops underneath (similar to Albany). These shops would be a benefit to the neighboring Annex and El Cerrito and could include restaurants, Acme Bakery, a Cheese Board, a Monterey Market and dare I say it? a Starbucks?? (I'm tired of driving to Berkeley to purchase these items) One has only to look at Babette's Bazaar in the area of SP and Burlingame to see what I mean by blight. The store has been abandoned/closed probably 20 years and has fallen into disrepair. (Can't SOMETHING be done?) Many other storefronts are closed and empty and the buildings are underutilized, not to mention architecturally insignificant, and, er, ugly!"* **Richmond and El Cerrito have entered into a joint planning effort for the San Pablo Corridor.**

How Did We Do on My Wishes for 2006?

Following is a progress report on how we did on my wishes for 2006:

1. Achieve significant efficiencies to wring more services out of the same amount of municipal revenue. Progress report: This is difficult to quantify, but I believe we are going the right direction.
2. Actually practice community-based policing in Richmond. Other than being hampered by the ability to recruit a full complement of officers, I believe Chief Magnus has achieved this objective.
3. Find a way to reduce non-essential City Council meeting time to avoid 10-hour, post-midnight meetings. I don't think we have found the silver bullet, but I am optimistic about 2007.
4. A City Council that actually practices mutual respect and cooperation. I believe things are getting better and will continue to improve in 2007.
5. Successfully complete annual performance reviews of City Council appointed officers. Thanks to lots of help from Leslie Knight and Phil Batchelor, as a consultant, we actually met this objective.
6. Complete installation of freeway signage for Richmond's historic sites, California historic landmarks and national park. The first six of 24 signs went up in December, 2006.
7. Institute a violence reduction coordinator position and begin making progress towards a homicide-free city in 2016 with substantial progress in 2006. This was a dismal failure.
8. Secure funding for a Marina Bay railroad grade separation and begin design of the project. This project seems to have gone nowhere, and it is even controversial in Marina Bay. We did

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- succeed in wringing some funding out of Pulte to help pay for an unspecified project, but the City Council balked at making other developers (Toll Brothers) contribute.
9. Establish railroad grade crossing Quiet Zones. Two-thirds of the Quiet Zones have been established, and the remainder will go in 2007. However, BNSF continues to fight the project.
 10. Adopt a sustainable (green) policy or ordinance for public works projects in Richmond. Despite direction by the City Council, there was no discernable progress in 2006.
 11. Adopt a plan to save and preserve for adaptive reuse the former Electrical Shop at Shipyard 3. No progress has been made, and the building continues to deteriorate.
 12. Turn responsibility for sewer collection system maintenance and liability 100% over to Veolia. This has been accomplished along with adequate funding to implement it.
 13. Find a way to achieve a Utility User Tax payment from Chevron that maximizes Richmond's potential revenue from that source. Chevron has, so far, managed to go the opposite direction.
 14. Full and successful implementation of street sweeping, code enforcement, vacant lot management, weed abatement and residential rental unit inspection and abatement programs. There are improvements in all of these except residential inspections, which seem to have stalled out.
 15. Implement a survey of Richmond residents and businesses to assess the effectiveness of City services, establish priorities and evaluate the willingness to fund additional levels of service where they cannot be achieved by improvements in efficiency. This is well on the way and will be on the City Council agenda in January 2007.
 16. Complete a Charter review in time to submit for the November 2006 ballot. Fat chance! But a move is underway to make the 2008 ballot.
 17. Either perfect the SAP system, or scrap it and select another enterprise system. A study has been completed, and an RFP is out for a new enterprise system.
 18. Devise a plan, perhaps with alternatives to be polled to City voters, to address Richmond's long-term infrastructure capital improvement and maintenance needs, including streets, parks, sewers and buildings. There is little progress on this, except for the Civic Center rehabilitation.
 19. Truly streamline and internally integrate the project approval process in Planning and Building Regulations to provide efficient service while still accommodating maximum public participation in the entitlement process. An audit has been completed, presumably with recommendations, and will be distributed to the City Council in January 2007.
 20. Adopt design guidelines applicable to Design Review. This is underway as part of the general plan process, but we could have used it already.
 21. Secure approval of Richmond as a Certified Local Government for historic preservation. The amended application was submitted in December 2006.
 22. Adopt a comprehensive policy and procedures manual to guide activities of the mayor and City Council. The City Council adopted a Procedures Manual in December, 2006.
 23. Implementing the use of electronic means for documenting and penalizing red light runners, illegal dumpers and other lawbreakers. There has been little progress, except that an RFP is out for surveillance video cameras.
 24. Make substantial progress toward the re-use of Point Molate and the San Pablo Peninsula Open Space project. Lack of progress with Point Molate and the Upstream agreement and EIR has stalled this out.
 25. Complete construction of Phase 1 of the Richmond Greenway and secure funding for Phase 2. Phase 1 construction is almost complete, and Phase 2 funding has been secured.
 26. Conclude commitments and entitlements for the Miraflores/Adachi project that include Richmond Greenway construction and Baxter Creek restoration. Resolution of this objective is pending completion of the EIR, but we are optimistic. CHCDC has purchased the Adachi property and committed to a project that includes the Greenway and restoration of Baxter Creek.
 27. Find a way to more quickly monitor and service non-operational street lights. I don't think this has improved much. Theft of copper wire continues to be a huge problem. The police don't seem to be very motivated to assist in identifying non functioning street lights.

28. Make substantial progress toward moving City government back to the Civic Center. Although I have a lot of concerns about details, this project had made tremendous progress during 2006.
29. As the Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency commitment nears the end, plan and implement benefit assessment districts for the Marina Bay area for infrastructure, landscaping and possibly a grade separation and for the Brickyard Cove area for infrastructure and landscaping. I haven't seen much progress on this.
30. Update the Internet accessible [Richmond Municipal Code](#) at least quarterly and update the minutes and agendas on the City's website at least weekly. A lot of improvements have been made during 2006, including complete makeover of the City's website. Unfortunately, some of the archival material, such as City Council Minutes going back several years, were lost.

Tom Butt 2006 Wishes for 2007

It occurred to me that my wishes for 2007 seem to fit into three categories: cleaner, leaner or greener. These are pretty broad, and I may have to stretch them a little to fit everything, but here goes:

Cleaner

1. Clean Richmond! I continue to believe in the [broken window theory](#). I would like to see our code enforcement, street sweeping and abatement teams continue to improve their efforts to clean up Richmond. I believe the resulting reduced crime, increased economic development, improved quality of life and increased property values can pay big dividends to us all.
2. Polish police presence. We have to find a way to successfully recruit officers for budgeted positions in the Police Department. Or maybe these shortages are a new way of life for California urban areas, in which case we must get innovative and find other ways to accomplish the same results using technology, non-sworn specialists, contractors, etc. Using budgeted funds for overtime may be temporarily popular with officers, but over time will result in burnout and diminished capacity.
3. Wash away violence! Despite an ambitious start, the plan for a Richmond Office of Violence Reduction went nowhere in 2006. I still believe the concept was exactly right, but it may be time to start over and get it right in 2007.
4. No more potholes. It turns out that "potholes" is actually a generic term for bad streets, of which we have more in Richmond than anywhere else in the Bay Area. We have to come to grips with our decades-long neglect of our municipal infrastructure. We have launched a Civic Center plan, and we have funded repairs of the sewage collection system. Streets, parks, street lights and other buildings now need our attention.

Leaner

5. Clean house! We still have a way to go in making our City government as efficient as it can be. Two initiatives that should be implemented in 2007 are the result of detailed and comprehensive audits of the Planning and Building Regulations Department and of the enterprise system, which found SAP to be a poor fit for our City.
6. Charter review. Complete the Charter review in 2007 so it can go on the 2008 ballot. There is a lot of housecleaning to be done.

Greener

7. Noise. [Noise pollution](#) is a huge public health issue, possibly way up there with air pollution and probably way ahead of mold. We need to complete the establishment and enforcement of

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- Quiet Zones at every grade crossing in Richmond, and we need to enforce our existing noise ordinance for violations such as boom box cars.
8. Grade Separations at Marina Bay. The gas drivers waste while waiting for trains and the plan for a ferry terminal make this a green issue. This is another 2006 issue that seems to have fizzled out, but it needs to get back on track.
 9. Green building policy. Despite direction by the City Council, there was no progress in 2006. The public wants sustainable building practices that are becoming commonplace in other California cities, and we need to implement it in 2007.
 10. Potties in parks. If we are going to provide parks for people, we have to provide functional restrooms.
 11. Preserving Rosie. Even though our national park doesn't have bears and woods, it is still a park and it's still national. What can be greener than a national park? Preserving the historical infrastructure that is the reason Richmond was chosen as the park's location is not only essential to the park's future, but reusing existing buildings is as sustainable as it gets. A number of very important buildings are at risk, including the Maritime Child Care Center and the Shipyard 3 rigger's Loft. If we don't save them in 2007, there may not be another chance.
 12. Cultural and Recreational Tourism. Not many people make a special trip to Richmond to gaze wistfully at Chevron's smokestacks, but they are coming in ever larger numbers to bicycle the Bay Trail, visit the Rosie the Riveter Memorial or the Red Oak Victory or take a self guided tour of the Point Richmond Historic District. Even if you lack nostalgia, the Richmond Visitors and Convention Bureau can show you that there is money in the past, which is something everyone can relate to. The year 2007 should see Richmond become a Certified Local Government, which is a special status conferred at the state and national level for cities that embrace historic preservation. Richmond became a White House-designated Preserve America Community in 2006. If there are any skeptics remaining, you will see Richmond's oldest railroad building and the target of years of skepticism and disdain become a landscaped gateway to Point Richmond and the proud home of one of Richmond's most successful businesses in 2007.
 13. General Plan. I hope we adopt a new general plan in 2007. There is substantial evidence that residents want a different kind of city, one that is healthy, pedestrian friendly, safe, attractive, sustainable and functional. I hope our new general plan will deliver the framework that will achieve those goals.
 14. Point Molate and the Point San Pablo Peninsula. I hope 2007 will resolve the uncertainty about this area, including the Bay Trail access at the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, the EIR for the Upstream project, the prospect for public acquisition of open space along the shoreline and the future of Terminal 4 and the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor. Many of these outcomes are awaiting the fate of Upstream's Point Molate plan, which is now two years old with no tangible progress.
 15. Richmond Greenway. Phase 1 will open in 2007, and Phase 2 should be under construction. I also hope to see the Greenway extended through the Adacahi property in 2007 so as to actually connect with the Ohlone Greenway at El Cerrito's Gateway Park.
 16. Home Front Festival. Plans are afoot to morph Richmond's Festival by the Bay into a bigger and better extravaganza called the Richmond Home Front Festival, a Rosie the River themed event in late September 2007 designed to be a regional or even national attraction. It will mark the official public opening of the Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park and feature the installation of the Henry Kaiser Exhibit in the Ford Building and a celebrity fund-raising event for Rosie the Riveter Trust. Waterfront activities will include performance of WW II-era music and a historical Home Front symposium.
 17. Global Warming and Sustainability. Communities all around us are doing their part to create a healthy and sustainable environment. Even the State of California has gone that direction. Richmond has been a holdout, and I hope 2007 is the year that Richmond takes that plunge. There are already proposals on the table awaiting staff and City Council action, such as using biodiesel in Richmond's port area, banning Styrofoam food and beverage containers, reducing

the permit fees for solar energy applications and using [Community Choice Aggregation](#) to purchase energy. Many others are being looked at in the general plan process.

18. Environmental Friendly Business. This one is for my wife, Shirley, who asks that Richmond's worn out mantra of creating a "business friendly environment" be modified to a goal of attracting "environmentally friendly businesses."

Happy New Year!