

**“Citizen Architect”  
Nomination of Thomas K. Butt, FAIA, LEED AP BD+C  
for  
AIACC Distinguished Practice Award**

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## Descriptive Narrative

Thomas K. (Tom) Butt, FAIA, LEED AP BD+C, has been an AIA member since 1973. After receiving his B. Arch degree from the University of Arkansas and serving as a U.S. Army combat engineer officer in Vietnam, he obtained a Master's Degree in Architecture and Urban Design at UCLA. In 1973, he founded and remains president of the Richmond, CA, Architecture-Engineering firm Interactive Resources, which celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013.

Returning to northern California, Tom and his wife, Shirley, moved to Richmond in 1973 and he became what the AIA recently refers to as a "Citizen Architect," serving on numerous boards and commissions of both public sector and private non-profit organizations.

In 1995, Tom was elected to the Richmond City Council, where he has served for nearly 19 years. As a local elected official, he also serves on the boards of numerous regional and statewide public sector organizations, all of which are on the cutting edge of planning and implementing sustainability, urban planning, greenhouse gas reduction and climate change adaptation.

Tom also founded two non-profit organizations in which he is still active:

- [East Brother Light Station, Inc.](#), which rehabilitated and now maintains a historic landmark lighthouse on an island in San Francisco Bay that operates as a bed and breakfast inn.
- [Rosie the Riveter Trust](#), the non-profit partner of Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park.



*In 1970, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Tom Butt was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for "Meritorious achievement in ground operations against hostile forces" and the Army Commendation Medal for "Meritorious achievement while serving with the 20th Engineer Brigade."*

As a City Council member, Tom has written and successfully led the adoption of all of the City of Richmond legislation required to establish one of California's most successful historic preservation programs, establish the Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park, and both save and rehabilitate many of Richmond's most important historic buildings. Tom is personally responsible for placing over 750 buildings in Richmond on the National Register of Historic Places. He has also donated significant *pro bono* services and raised over \$10 million in grants and tax credits to fund successful historic preservation of buildings owned by public agencies and non-profits.

Tom has been a leader in Richmond's successful efforts to become one of California's most sustainable and livable cities, and, as a board member and former chair of the Local Government Commission, has provided resources to elected officials in counties and cities both in California and across the U.S. to create healthy, walkable, and resource-efficient communities. Examples of legislation and policies for which Tom played a lead role include California's toughest local anti-smoking laws, California's first General Plan Health element, Contra Costa County's first plastic bag and Styrofoam food container ban and an Industrial Safety Ordinance.

In addition to being a “Citizen Architect” for the last 40 years, Tom has managed a successful architectural practice. He has written and lectured widely on construction technology, including authoring a number of ASTM standards on building serviceability.

In summary, Tom Butt has lived a “career of dedicated commitment to the built environment and demonstrated innovation.”

## Supporting Materials

### Community Service

The CCAIA Distinguished Practice Award recognizes a career of dedicated commitment to the built environment and demonstrated innovation in one or more of the following roles:

- As an advocate for design excellence.
- As a leader in responding to the challenges of an individual building type.
- As a collaborator within the design and construction process.
- As an educator/mentor to other professionals in this practice area.
- As a recipient of professional recognition in a specific practice area.
- **For leadership in other areas which advanced the architectural profession and/or the built environment.**

This nomination is for Thomas K. (Tom) Butt, FAIA, LEED AP BD+C, who has a distinguished career in all six of the roles listed for a Distinguished Practice Award. If, however, we had to focus on one, it would be as a “Citizen Architect,” “for leadership in other areas which advanced the architectural profession and/or the built environment.”

### Citizen Architect

Here is what the AIA has to say about the “Citizen Architect:”<sup>1</sup>

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) believes that society and the profession benefit from civically engaged architects, and that these members should be actively supported at all levels of service. The [AIA Citizen Architect program](#) seeks to assist architects that are currently or would like to be civically engaged in elected and appointed positions, and provides these members with programming, networking opportunities, and resources. Explanation and Justification As part of a commitment to increasing the number of architects running for elected office or serving on appointed boards/commissions, the American Institute of Architects National Board of Directors passed a resolution honoring and supporting “citizen architects.”

The Member Outreach Subcommittee of the Board Advocacy Committee also developed a definition of “Citizen Architect,” which follows: “The Citizen Architect uses her/his insights, talents, training and experience to contribute meaningfully, beyond self, to the improvement of the community and human condition. The Citizen Architect stays informed on local, state and federal issues, and makes time for service to the community. The Citizen Architect advocates for higher living standards, the creation of a sustainable environment, quality of life, and the greater good. The Citizen Architect seeks to advocate for the broader purposes of architecture through civic activism, writing and publishing, by gaining appointment to boards and commissions, and through elective office at all levels of government.”

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.aia.org/aiaucmp/groups/aia/documents/pdf/aiab079086.pdf>, Issue Brief: The American Institute of Architects• Government Advocacy• Current Issue Position and Analysis AIA Position

According to the AIA, only 1,250 (one percent of the total AIA membership) serves in an elected or appointed role on government. Of those, only 55 are city council members.

### *Legislator of the Year*

Tom Butt, FAIA, is one of those 55 among 81,000 AIA members, and he has served on the City Council of the City of Richmond, CA (population 103,000) for over 19 years, serving twice as vice-mayor (Richmond has an elected mayor rather than a mayor position that rotates among council members).

In 2013, Tom Butt was recognized by the California Preservation Foundation with a President's Award as "Legislator of the Year" for 2013.

Although the *Legislator of the Year* award was primarily for achievement in the field of historic preservation, Tom has relentlessly pursued and provided leadership for a legislative agenda in Richmond that has not only changed the face of Richmond but has also provided examples for other cities to follow in planning, sustainability and urban design.

### *Other Awards and Recognitions*

- [East Bay Chapter of the American Institute of Architects](#) Practice and Technology Achievement Award for "determination to explore issues of building technology and his efforts devoted toward sharing his findings with the public and the profession."
- [West Contra Costa Unified Education Fund](#) Distinguished Citizen Award<sup>2</sup>
- U.S. Coast Guard [Meritorious Public Service Award](#)<sup>3</sup>
- [ASTM](#) Award of Appreciation for Outstanding Service
- President of the United States Award for Outstanding Community Achievement of Vietnam Era Veterans
- [Best Local Politician](#), [East Bay Express](#)
- Arkansas Alumni Association National [Community Service Award](#)

### *Elective and Appointive Service*

Being a city council member leads to opportunities to serve and provide leadership on regional, statewide and national organizations that also influence planning, sustainability and urban design. Tom currently serves on:

- [Local Government Commission](#). Tom has been a board member for 18 years, a board member for 10 years and served as chair for two years.

The Local Government Commission (LGC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership organization that provides inspiration, technical assistance, and networking to local elected officials and other dedicated community leaders who are working to create healthy, walkable, and resource-efficient communities. The LGC's membership is composed of local elected officials, city and county staff, planners, architects, and community leaders who are committed to making their communities more livable, prosperous, and resource-efficient. The local Government Commission is perhaps best known as author of "The Ahwahnee Principles," a set of guidelines for resource-efficient communities.

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<sup>2</sup> In 1991, Tom Butt and others filed suit ([Butt v. State of California](#)) against the State of California to block closing of schools in what was then the Richmond Unified School District. The schools were reopened under a court injunction, and the suit eventually made its way to the California Supreme Court where Butt et al not only prevailed but set a new standard for responsibility of the state for local school districts.

<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Coast Guard's second highest civilian medal.

- [Contra Costa Transportation Authority](#) Commission member

As Contra Costa County's transportation sales tax agency, the Authority oversees the design and construction of the transportation projects included in the Expenditure Plans, carries out the programs included in the Expenditure Plans, most notably, the county's Growth Management Program, and provides the financial structure that ensures the optimum use of the sales tax dollars as intended by the voters. The Authority also serves as Contra Costa County's Congestion Management Agency (CMA). In that capacity, the Authority is the primary transportation planning agency for Contra Costa County, responsible for prioritizing the county's share of available federal, state and regional transportation funds. As the CMA, the Authority prepares the county's [Congestion Management Program](#) (CMP), monitors levels of service on the county's roadways and works with other CMAs and agencies to address regional issues. The Authority is Contra Costa's Program Manager for the return-to-source portion of the regional [Transportation Fund for Clean Air \(TFCA\)](#). In this capacity the Authority is responsible for the allocation of approximately \$1.3 million dollars annually for projects that reduce air pollution caused by motor vehicles.

- [League of California Cities](#) Environmental Quality Policy Committee member

The Environmental Quality Policy Committee reviews issues related to air and water quality, CEQA, integrated waste management, hazardous materials, coastal issues, and utilities.

- [Local Agency Formation Commission](#) (LAFCO) Commission member

In 1963, the California Legislature responded to the urban boundary wars, and the problem of public finance and service they created, by enacting the Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs). This law established a commission in each county responsible for overseeing most forms of local government boundary change, including incorporation, annexations, and special district formations. In the interest of more orderly development, LAFCOs were to act as judges of boundary disputes among governments and communities. Since 1963, numerous changes have been made to the law, culminating in the current Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act of 2000, operative January 1, 2001.

- [San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission](#) (BCDC) Commission member

The 27-member San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) was created by the California Legislature in 1965 in response to broad public concern over the future of San Francisco Bay. The Commission is made up of appointees from the following local governments and state/federal agencies: The open water, marshes and mudflats of greater San Francisco Bay, including Suisun, San Pablo, Honker, Richardson, San Rafael, San Leandro and Grizzly Bays and the Carquinez Strait.

- [West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee](#) (WCCTAC) City of Richmond Representative

WCCTAC is one of four Regional Transportation Planning Committees in Contra Costa County. WCCTAC is governed by a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement between the following member agencies: the cities of El Cerrito, Hercules, Pinole, Richmond, San Pablo; Contra Costa County; and the transit providers, AC Transit, BART, and WestCAT.

- [Marin Energy Authority](#) (MEA) Board member

MEA administers California's first Community Choice Aggregation program, MEA is governed by a thirteen-member Board of Directors representing each city in Marin County, the County itself and the City of Richmond. The purpose of the Marin Energy Authority is to address climate change by reducing energy related greenhouse gas emissions and securing energy supply, price stability, energy efficiencies and local economic and workforce benefits. It is the intent of MEA to promote the development and use of a wide range of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency programs, including but not limited to wind, solar, geothermal and biomass.

### Examples of Volunteer and Legislative Initiatives

- 1977: **Point Richmond Historic District:** Formed and led a committee that successfully nominated the [Point Richmond Historic District](#) (330 contributing structures) to the National Register of Historic Places.
- 1978 – **East Brother Light Station:** Founded and continues to serve as board president for the non-profit corporation, [East Brother Light Station, Inc.](#). The effort received many national awards, including a National Trust Honor Award.
- **Winehaven:** Served as the chair of a committee that, working with the U.S. Navy, led the successful effort to place [Winehaven Historic District](#) (Village of Point Molate) on the National Register of Historic Places. The district includes 33 buildings placed on the National Register in 1978.
- 1984 – **Ford Assembly Building:** Prepared *pro bono* a successful nomination by Interactive Resources for the [Ford Assembly Building](#) to the National Register of Historic Places. As a City Council member, Tom Butt fought efforts to demolish the building and supported a policy of rehabilitating it. In 2008, the building won an [Honor Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation](#).
- 1997: **Richmond Shipyards:** Authored a resolution (203-97) in the Richmond City council authorizing a successful nomination of the Richmond Shipyards to the National Register of Historic Places and the list of California Registered Historic Landmarks.
- 1999 - **Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park:** Authored resolution 129-99 by the Richmond City Council expressing support for the proposed Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park and committing the City of Richmond and the National Park Service to a partnership.
- 1999 - **Richmond Historic Structures Code:** Wrote the City of *Richmond Historic Structures Code* (RMC 6.06), a comprehensive preservation ordinance subsequently adopted by the City Council.
- 1999 - **Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park:** Worked diligently with the National Park Service to secure legislation and commitments from the City of Richmond in support **Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park**.
- 2000 - **Rosie the Riveter Trust:** Founder, board president for the first 11 years and current board member of Rosie the Riveter Trust, a non-profit corporation whose mission it is to support the National Park Service in the establishment and operation of the Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park.
- 2000 – **Shipyard 3 Buildings:** Authored Resolution 46a-00, which laid the groundwork for saving all the remaining Shipyard



Hotel Mac-Point Richmond Historic District



East Brother Light Station



Winehaven (Point Molate)



Tom Butt receiving National Trust Honor Award from Nancy Reagan

Buildings. 2008 - Authored resolution passed by the Richmond City Council providing a [plan and policy](#) for rehabilitation of historic buildings at [former Shipyard 3](#), now part of Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park. 2013 – Facilitated listing by the City of Richmond of three currently unoccupied buildings on the national Register of Historic Places with a commercial real estate broker for adaptive reuse. Several prospective leases are currently being negotiated.

- 2000 - **Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park:** Lobbied aggressively for the successful establishment of the Rosie the Riveter WW II National Historical Park, including testifying before both U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate committees. The bill was signed by President Clinton on October 25, 2000.
- 2001 – **Shipyard 3 Bay Trail:** Authored Resolution 27-01, which authorized submission of a grant application prepared by TRAC, the Trails for Richmond Action Committee, “to plan Bay Trail access into ... National Historical Park sites designated in Shipyard III.” Authored Resolution 15-05, which adopts the trail alignment and accepts the schematic design of the December 2004 "Shipyard No. 3 Bay Trail Access Feasibility & Planning Study, Phase II Schematic Design, Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historic Park, “ authorizes submission of a Bay Trail grant application to the Association of Bay Area Governments to prepare a construction design and bid package to implement the Phase II Schematic Design,
- 2002 - **Certified Local Government:** Prepared Certified Local Government application from the City of Richmond to California State Office of Historic Preservation. Authored Resolution 25-02, February 5, 2002, authorizing filing an application with the State Office of Historic Preservation to become a Certified Local Government. 2007 – Prepared the original application, later amended in 2007 by the Richmond Planning Department, to designate Richmond as a [Certified Local Government](#).
- 2003 – **Atchison Village:** Arranged for Rosie the Riveter Trust to fund a successful national Register nomination for Atchison Village. <http://www.tombutt.com/forum/2003/030614.htm>. In 2008, a Certified Local Government grant was awarded for a historic structures report for Atchison Village. <http://www.tombutt.com/forum/2008/080604.htm>. In 2010, Rosie the Riveter Trust paid for a historic wood window prototype retrofit, and in 2012, Tom Butt prepared
- 2003 – Arranged for Rosie the Riveter Trust to fund a successful national Register nomination for Atchison Village. <http://www.tombutt.com/forum/2003/030614.htm>. In 2008, a Certified Local Government grant was awarded for a historic structures report for Atchison Village. <http://www.tombutt.com/forum/2008/080604.htm>. In 2010,



*Riggers Loft*



*S.S. Red Oak Victory, Richmond*



*Point Richmond Gateway -  
Trainmaster Building/Santa Fe  
Reading Room*



*Tom Butt served with a National Trust  
for Historic Preservation Post-Katrina  
damage assessment and relief team in  
New Orleans – above, the Ninth Ward*

Rosie the Riveter Trust paid for a historic wood window prototype retrofit, and in 2012, Tom Butt prepared specifications for wood window replacement as a pro-bono project.

- 2004 – **Whirley Crane:** Authored Resolution 80-04 authorizing the City of Richmond to provide a location for the permanent installation of Whirley Crane #2 at Point Potrero Marine Terminal and to take possession of the crane for use as an interpretive Exhibit in the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park. 2005 - Led a successful effort of Rosie the Riveter Trust in partnership with the National Park Service to relocate by barge an historical Whirley crane weighing over 200 tons from a privately owned port to the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park Shipyard 3. 2005 – Authored Resolution 96-05 authorizing the city manager to accept donation of Whirley Crane #2 upon its delivery to the southeast corner of the easternmost dry dock of Point Potrero Marine Terminal for use as an interpretive Exhibit in the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park. 2006 - Presented a “[3-Minute Success Story](#)” at the California Preservation Conference on the Whirley Crane Relocation
- 2005 **Post-Katrina Volunteer Team:** Volunteered and served with a team from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to provide damage assessments and [technical advice in New Orleans historic districts](#). [www.nps.gov/partnerships/snapshots\\_rosieriveter.htm](http://www.nps.gov/partnerships/snapshots_rosieriveter.htm).
- 2007 – **Preserve America City:** Co-authored a successful application for Richmond, California to become a “[Preserve America City](#).” The city of Richmond’s PRISM project (Preserve Richmond to Interpret and Support Memories) recently was awarded a \$75,000 Preserve America grant to sponsor reconnaissance survey work that will identify historic resources to be incorporated into the Rosie the Riveter--World War II Home Front National Historical Park. Authored Resolution 91-06 authorizing application as a Preserve America Community, a designation later conferred by The White House on November 3, 2006.

*Tom Butt provided five years of pro bono project management services for the \$7 million Maritime Child Care Center rehabilitation that included raising \$7 million in grants and tax credits, obtaining all approvals from a dozen agencies and providing all construction management services.*

- **Riggers Loft:** 2012-2013 – authored successful City of Richmond legislation that steered a \$3 million grant from CalEMA for an emergency operations center to be used to rehabilitate the 2006 - Authored a successful submittal of a “Save America’s Treasures” grant application for \$150,000 by Rosie the Riveter Trust that would help fund the partial restoration of the Rigger Loft Building, which is one of the surviving original buildings of Shipyard 3. 2009 - Awarded (on behalf of Rosie the Riveter Trust) a Save America’s Treasures grant for \$150,000 for the Rigger’s Loft rehabilitation, a



Ford Assembly Plant



Whirley Crane



Tom Butt accepts \$10,000 donation to Rosie the Riveter Trust from Lynn Cheney



Maritime Child Care Center

project of Rosie the Riveter Trust, National Park Service and City of Richmond. Secured City of Richmond match funding for a historic structures report, structural evaluation and rehabilitation

- 2007 – **Governor’s Historic Preservation Award:** Prepared a successful nomination for a [Governor’s Historic Preservation Award](#) for three public agencies and two non-profits, including [Rosie the Riveter Trust](#), chaired by Tom Butt. The award was for collaboration developing programs and infrastructure of the [Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park](#) in Richmond.
- 2008 – **Point Richmond Gateway:** Presented a “[3-Minute Success Story](#)” at the 2008 California Preservation Conference for the Point [Richmond Gateway Project](#), which included rehabilitation of the 1903 Santa Fe Reading Room, the only remaining original building from the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad yards established in Richmond at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Interactive Resources provided *pro bono* services for the move and structural shell. Tom Butt authored Richmond City Council legislation required to save and relocate the building.
- 2009 – **Miraflores:** Successfully fought for preservation of historic homes and greenhouses at the site of historic nurseries. <http://www.tombutt.com/forum/2009/091226.htm>.
- 2013 – **SS Red Oak Victory** – [Authored successful City of Richmond legislation](#) providing permanent free berthing for the SS Red Oak Victory. A Victory Ship built in the Richmond shipyards and now on the National Register of Historic Places and a part of Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park.

## Articles

### [“Richmond honored at California Preservation Awards” \(Richmond Confidential, October 13, 2013\)](#)



*Richmond City Council member Tom Butt accepts the Legislator of the Year Award at the California Preservation Awards (Photo by: Spencer Brown)*

By [Mark Andrew Boyer](#) Posted October 3, 2013 12:55 pm

Richmond City Council member Tom Butt reflected as he applied butter to his dinner roll from a small white ramekin. It had been exactly 40 years since he moved to Richmond, and in that time he’d seen local attitudes towards historic preservation shift dramatically.

“There were people who basically wanted to tear everything down,” Butt said. “I think now we’ve gotten to the point where people realize it’s a good thing. Now it’s just a matter of raising the money.”

Butt, a fierce defender of historic buildings in Richmond, and an architect by trade, was in San Francisco to receive the Legislator of the Year award at the 2013 California Preservation Awards last week.

Butt wasn’t the only winner from Richmond at Friday’s gala event. The Rosie the Riveter Visitor Education Center at Ford Point also took home a design award in the renovation category.

The visitor center serves to commemorate so-called Rosie the Riveters – female machinists and metal workers who built World War II munitions. The facility is the culmination of an almost 20-year effort to preserve the Ford Assembly plant that also served as one of the biggest military manufacturing centers in American history.

Former City Council member Donna Powers got the ball rolling on the Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park in the mid-’90s. “When she left she made me promise to make it happen,” Butt said. Butt made good on his promise by writing most of the legislation that made the park possible.

In 2004, Developer Eddie Orton bought the Ford plant from the Richmond Development Agency and began rehabbing the buildings. In the past five years, the historic buildings at Ford Point have hauled in several design awards. The complex has also attracted several new businesses.

“I always pitch historic preservation as an economic issue,” Butt said. And with each success story, saving historic buildings has become more popular in Richmond.

The visitor center, which opened in May 2012, is located in a 12,000-square-foot 1930s oil house. It is adjacent to the sprawling, Albert Kahn-designed Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant, which was renovated in 2009.

The design team retained many of the building’s original features, including an elegant steel roof, industrial pendant lamps, and painted steel windows. Workers cut up and removed ten enormous steel fuel tanks so that the existing basement to be converted to habitable space.

The main floor features a gift shop, an information desk and temporary exhibits. The architects subdivided the 5,000-square-foot basement into a theater, a library, a classroom, and a wide hallway that leads to restrooms.

The same design team, contractor and developer behind the 500,000-square-foot assembly plant renovation reunited for the visitor center job. “By the time we got to that building we were really good at working with each other,” said Kent Royle, the Project Manager from Marcy Wong Donn Logan Architects.

“Nothing is straightforward in a historic building,” Royle said. But despite the challenges, construction was completed in a little over a year.

The U.S. National Park Service now operates the facility. Through a complex leasing agreement, the park service leases the building from the city of Richmond, and the city leases the building from its owner, Orton Development.

“Until we had the visitor center, we didn’t really have a place where we could tell the story,” Deputy Park Superintendent Tom Leatherman said. “We had a bunch of sites, but there really wasn’t a central location.”

Butt is just happy that other people in Richmond are now seeing the value in saving old buildings. “After you have success after success after success, people stop fighting,” he said.

***“Firm helps craft local landscape” (Contra Costa Times, May 5, 2007)***

**By Janis Mara, BUSINESS WRITER**

Updated: 04/05/2007 07:35:47 AM PDT

JUST AS the East Brother Light Station, perched on a tiny island at Richmond’s western tip, is an integral part of the city, so is architect Tom Butt, who with his firm Interactive Resources helped save the 133-year-old lighthouse in 1978.

But rescuing a landmark from demolition and turning it into a successful bed and breakfast inn is not exactly heavy lifting for the head of the architectural and engineering firm. It’s more like business as usual.

In the 34 years since he co-founded the Point Richmond-based firm, Tom Butt, Richmond City Council member and author of the widely read Tom Butt E-Forum newsletter, helped get the entire north side of Point Richmond added to the National Register of Historic Places, restored Point Richmond’s beloved Hotel Mac and, in 1976, erected one of the first generators to feed power into an electric grid in California.

It has always been clear that Butt, now 63, wanted to be an architect. In high school, at an age when most people are figuring out how to ride a skateboard, Butt was doing drafting for an office of four architects and working for the highway department in his native Arkansas, repairing bridges during school vacations.

At the University of Arkansas, he worked summers as a trainee architect for the National Park Service, and he went on to get a master's in architecture in urban design from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1973.

"I got my artistic side from my maternal grandmother, who was an artist," said the ever-intense Butt, squirming in a chair in a conference room at Interactive Resources' headquarters, just steps from the Hotel Mac, a distinctive three-story brick building built in 1911 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

"Helen King (his grandmother) created stencils, stamped patterns on burlap and sold the patterns as a kit, along with cloth and a guidebook on how to hook rugs," Butt said. "I used to help her."

In 1973, his dream was realized when he teamed up with four partners, including architect John Clinton, to found Interactive Resources (the other three eventually from Business 1

left). The country was locked in an energy crisis caused by a Middle East oil embargo, and the company soon became one of the first to come up with energy-efficient designs — one of which, a solar home, found its way into the pages of *Sunset* magazine.

The 27-employee company, which pulled in \$4 million in revenue in 2006, has worked on projects throughout the Bay Area. Its projects include the 250,000-square-foot Point Richmond Tech Center, currently occupied by tenants such as the California Department of Justice DNA lab, and a job evaluating and designing repairs for Candlestick Park after it was damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

Butt describes the East Brother lighthouse as "one of our pet projects." He has written grants, put in a desalinization and sewage system, and worked endlessly, along with his mentor, community activist Lucretia Edwards, to save the lighthouse. Butt also put in a good deal of work on another one of Richmond's proudest landmarks, Rosie the Riveter Park.

Another pet project just coming to fruition: Butt has managed to save a 100-year-old railroad workers' social club, the only remaining structure from Richmond's original railroad yards across from the Richmond Plunge, the municipal swim center on East Richmond Avenue that itself is under renovation.

"(The Trainmasters Building) was on the verge of being destroyed," Butt said. "I pulled that thing from the toilet so many times, I don't want to tell you."

After some adroit negotiating on the architect's part, Richmond-based The Mechanics Bank is taking over the Trainmasters Building and putting \$1 million into the building and plaza. Interactive Resources did all the architectural design and engineering for free.

The councilman said that since he was elected in 1995, Interactive Resources has done no work for the city of Richmond.

After he became a councilman, one of Butt's most successful community projects was his e-mail newsletter, which has a circulation of 2,000. Much like the celebrated Craigslist, as more and more people signed up, others have approached him and asked him to circulate news of interest to the community. (To sign up, send your name and e-mail address to [tom.butt@intres.com](mailto:tom.butt@intres.com) and write "Subscribe to E-Forum" in the subject line.)

Butt's company got a glowing review from a recent client.



"They (Interactive Resources) did a great job last year evaluating what the city of Merced's needs would be for its corporate yard and designing a set of buildings," said John Sagin, senior architect for Merced.

"It's difficult to stay within a schedule, especially ours, which was pretty tight, and they did it on time and within our budget," Sagin said.

The overall project is estimated at \$28 million, he said. "Hopefully, we'll be able to use them on the next phase, once we get the project funded."

Contact Janis Mara at [jmara@angnewspapers.com](mailto:jmara@angnewspapers.com) or (510) 208-6468.

### *"Arkansas Alumni Association" (November 4, 2005)*

The Arkansas Alumni Association shares the University's vision in which the University of Arkansas is a nationally competitive, student-centered research university serving Arkansas and the world. During an annual awards ceremony, the Association recognizes those individuals that continue to bring national and local prominence to the University and the Arkansas Alumni Association through their research, exemplary public and community service, and valued leadership.

The Association will honor ten award recipients at the 61st Annual Alumni Awards Banquet Nov. 4, 2005, at the Janelle Y. Hembree Alumni House on the University of Arkansas campus. Thomas K. Butt, **(FAIA BA '68, BARCH '68)** Founder and president of Architect Interactive Resources was awarded the [Community Service Award](#), which recognizes unselfish and extensive service by alumni to their community and to humankind.

### *"Richmond rejuvenation champions enjoy fruits of their labor" (Kaiser Permanente – A History of Total Health, September 24, 2011)*

September 24, 2011

**By Ginny McPartland, Heritage writer**



Rosie park curator Veronica Rodriguez explains the set up of the child care center's dining area.

The Bay Area community of Richmond – birthplace of Permanente medicine – has been bustling this year with activities related to the commemoration of the California city's role as a World War II shipbuilding hub. The economically depressed and high-crime community is pulling together to create positive change in its image and livability. Recent achievements give its diverse population reason

to be proud and to celebrate.

Two major developments – renovation and reopening of the stellar Maritime Child Development Center and significant progress on the conversion of a shipyard oil house into a visitor's center for the Rosie national park – can be called milestones in the city's quest for its place in the sun.

The renovated Maritime Child Development Center rear view. Note portholes. The bottom was the end of the fire escape chute for kids in the early days.

These successes are putting smiles on the faces of Richmond's movers and shakers who have worked *for years* to bring them to fruition.

The \$9 million renovation of the child care center, built in 1943 by Henry Kaiser with federal funds, was a collaboration of many community groups – The Richmond Community Foundation's Nystrom United Revitalization Effort (NURVE), the city of Richmond, the Rosie the Riveter Trust, Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park, Richmond College Prep Schools and West Contra Costa Unified School District. (For more on the preschool program, see "Sounds of children return to Richmond historic child care center" posted here on August 25.)

### Local champions play major role



Colorful play equipment is part of the center's new look.

Richmond City Councilman and local architect Tom Butt has been a constant cheerleader for the project for the past six years. Rosie Trust leaders Jane Bartke and Diane Hedler, Kaiser Permanente's representative on the trust, among others, have been relentless in efforts to secure federal financing for restoration of the national historic landmark. The trust hired its first executive director, Marsha Mather-Thrift, this year to help with its continuing fundraising work to

support the park.

The restored center's future will be celebrated with a grand reopening 10 a.m. Thursday, September 29, at 1014 Florida Avenue (on the corner of Harbour Way). Host Joan Davis, president and chief executive officer of the Richmond Community Foundation whose office is in the center, has invited the public to come to see the jewel of a school inside and out.

The renovation features the reuse of many of the original materials, including the transforming of bunk bed wood into office partitions. The inside also features: the original redwood on the stairways, double banisters – one at a child's level and one at an adult's level – as well as the preservation of a fire escape chute intended for the children in the event of a fire. (It was never used and has been closed up at the outdoor end.)



Note double bannisters, one for children, one for adults.

The Maritime center is considered a part of the multi-site Rosie the Riveter national park, and park service curators have created a time warp for visitors to get a glimpse of how the original preschool classrooms looked. The center was the site of an exemplary child care program for the children of Kaiser Richmond Shipyard workers and was considered way ahead of its time.

*“Historic Crane Docks at Richmond Park,” (Berkeley Daily Planet, November 8, 2005)*

*Douglas Allen-Taylor, Tuesday November 08, 2005*

From the far end of the pier, the newest addition to Richmond’s Rosie the Riveter National Historical Park seemed, as it hung suspended from the crane of a tug barge, like an odd-shaped child’s toy dredged out of the bay waters being held up and examined by a curious beachcomber.

It was only when you realized that the little figures scuttling on the dock below it are not sandcrabs but construction workers that you began to realize the enormous scale of the Whirley Crane, a revolving boxcar sitting on massive legs as tall as a 10-story building.

The numbers in the handout given to press at the dock entrance—Weight: 229,000 pounds. Boom length: 110 feet. Lifting capacity: 166,000 pounds—didn’t fully convey the size of the machine towering above the onlookers.

The Whirley Crane got its name not because of the speed of its movement—it probably moved carefully and deliberately because a single error could cost several lives—but because the crane could turn a full 360 degrees, thus allowing the boom to achieve a speed of operation as it went about several tasks.

Sixty years ago, workers—many of them women—used to sit in the turret at the top of the Whirley Crane, operating the controls that caused the 110 foot boom to lift and assemble and put into place the massive sheets of iron that eventually became the cruisers and battleships that sailed out into the Pacific and helped win the naval war for the United States.

Since then, the crane has sat rusting and isolated and all but forgotten on a pier on the Richmond docks. The crane was eventually donated to the City of Richmond by its owner, the Levin-Richmond Terminal Corporation, after a coalition of Rosie the Riveter National Park organizers came up with the idea that the crane would be a valuable addition to the park.

On Friday of last week a handful of female former shipyard workers—now in their 80s and 90s—joined with Naval personnel, Richmond city officials and workers, National Park Service officers, construction workers, and various dignitaries to watch one of the last remaining Whirley Cranes take the short but logistically complicated barge ride down the harbor waters from Shipyard Number 1 and get placed in a site for permanent viewing at Richmond’s Shipyard No. 3 next to the docked SS Red Oak Victory, one of the last of those World War II era warships.

While Friday’s ceremony was limited to a selected few for safety purposes related to the move and placement of the Whirley Crane, a public installation ceremony is being planned within a few months.

Visitors can already tour the gray-painted Red Oak Victory, which is slowly being restored as a living memorial to the World War II war effort. A Naval officer involved with the restoration project said that while the Red Oak will never put out to sea again, it will eventually be shipshape enough to take limited sails up and down the bay.

Now, in addition to seeing the warship, dockside visitors will also be able to walk past and examine a living example of one of the type of construction cranes that built it and, therefore, begin to get a small look back into an era that seems to dwarf all present human accomplishment.

A National Park spokesperson said that the Whirley Crane “appears to be operational,” and that if it is, visitors may one day be able to see the turret revolve its full 360 degrees as it did during the shipbuilding years.

Rosie the Riveter Trust president and Richmond City Councilmember Tom Butt, who was out of town Friday, said in a statement that the installation was “an unprecedented collaboration to save the Whirley

Crane for posterity, to remind us of the single-minded and Herculean effort the home front generation made over 60 years ago.”

*“City Council Election 2012: Tom Butt” (Richmond Confidential, October 19, 2012)*



“I think I am really unique because my record shows that you don’t have to pit environmental issues and quality of life issues against issues involving business and industry,” Butt said. (Photo by: Jason Jaacks)

By [Stephen Hobbs](#) Posted October 19, 2012 4:47 pm

In March 1970, Tom Butt, fresh out of serving in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Vietnam, chose to be discharged there. He mainly wanted to visit Angkor Wat, an architectural wonder in nearby Cambodia. Butt then continued a long “odyssey” back to the United States through Southeast Asia, across the Trans-Siberian Railway in the former Soviet Union, and through Europe.

“The people you meet and the people you travel with are some of the things you remember the best,” Butt said. “It was just one of those things you do when you are young.”

His trip to Angkor Wat, and subsequent trip home, were also emblematic of two of his passions: architecture and nature. It’s almost 8,000 miles from Richmond City Hall to Angkor, Cambodia, but Butt says there’s more connection than you’d think – and that his ability to merge an interest in the human-built world with an appreciation for the natural makes him the most qualified candidate in this year’s City Council field.

“I think I am really unique because my record shows that you don’t have to pit environmental issues and quality of life issues against issues involving business and industry,” Butt said. “They are not inherently at odds and there is nobody on the council and no candidate that really sits in the position I sit in.”

Butt was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1944. When he was less than a year old, he and his family moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas, where his family put down roots. His father was an Arkansas Chancery and Probate judge for 50 years and his mother was a librarian in the Fayetteville Public Library.

Butt’s love of architecture and nature was evident at an early age; he worked part time in architectural offices when he was in high school. He stayed in Arkansas to complete his undergraduate degree, graduating from the University of Arkansas with a bachelor of arts degree and a bachelor of architecture in 1967.

While at the university, Butt spent a summer with the U.S. Forest Service, then four more working as a student trainee architect for the National Park Service.

For Butt, working in the National Park Service was “the best job I have ever had in my life,” he said. “I got to spend one summer in San Francisco, two summers in Yellowstone and one summer in Hawaii.”

In 1971, Butt was married to his current wife Shirley and by 1973 he completed a master’s degree in architecture and urban design at UCLA.

After graduating from UCLA, Tom and Shirley moved to Richmond for its San Francisco Bay shoreline access at a lower cost than other Bay Area cities. That same year he also founded Interactive Resources, an architectural and engineering firm located in Point Richmond that he still serves as the president of to this day.

Butt also became active in the community. He was inspired by a group of women called the “little old ladies in tennis shoes,” who were community activists exhibiting “hardcore volunteerism” in the city, specifically their work with expanding public access to the shoreline in the city.

One of those women in particular, Lucretia Edwards, led him to become active in the Richmond community. Over the next 20 years he served a variety of roles, such as president of the Richmond Rotary Club and the Point Richmond Neighborhood Council, and participated in many efforts to restore Richmond’s shoreline.

His two decades of unofficial service left Butt at a crossroads. He decided that to have a voice in the future of the city, he needed to have a vote in the City Council. Butt felt connected with people on the council, and he felt they respected him for his expertise. Butt he then had a “rude awakening.”

“One day I woke up and I realized that none of them gave a damn,” Butt said. “They weren’t listening to me. They were listening to the people who were buying them and the people who were providing big money for their campaigns.”

So Butt ran for his own seat, and after losing in 1993, was elected in 1995. He’s been a member of the council ever since.

In those first years, Butt described the dynamic with the other councilmembers as “me against the world.”

Now his feelings are much different. Seventeen years after he was first elected to office, the 68-year-old leans back comfortably in his black leather chair in the Interactive Solutions conference room.

“The last couple of years have been particularly good,” Butt said. “I have had a supportive majority on the City Council that has supported almost if not everything that is important to me.”

As a current member of the council, and one of two incumbents running for re-election on Nov. 6, Butt has the advantage of already being identified by Richmond voters. When he first campaigned for election, Butt was much more active in walking precincts and using phone banks to reach potential voters.

He still has campaign mailers that he sends out to Richmond voters, but now he also uses his e-forum as a way to interact with his constituents. Butt regularly sends out emails about issues, articles and events that are important to him and he feels will interest his readers, and is able to increase his exposure to more Richmond residents. “That communication mechanism puts me in touch with thousands of people,” Butt said.

In one of his most recent e-forums, Butt laid out his opinions on state and local measures, including his support of Measure N.

Although he is not a member of the Richmond Progressive Alliance — “I have never been asked,” he says – Butt said he also appreciates not being strictly identified with one organization.

“I like to be independent,” he said. “I don’t want to be labeled with a group.”

But Butt agreed that he is generally “on the same wavelength” on a lot of issues with the RPA.

If re-elected, Butt hopes to continue the meshing of business and environmental issues for the next four years. It’s what he’s been interested in for more than forty years, and whether it’s a 12<sup>th</sup>-century Cambodian temple in the jungle or a 21<sup>st</sup> century oil refinery on the edge of the Bay, Butt says he thinks he’s got an appreciation for the two that keeps his approach fresh.

“I am living proof that there is an in-between,” Butt said. “I am right here and I understand it and I live it.”

## Letters of Recommendation