Richmond, California

Will Richmond Be Great in 2008?

Two Roads to Richmond?

2007 Year End Review

Tom Butt, Richmond City Council Member

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Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Top Three Richmond Stories of 2007 1
City of Crime and Violence or a Cool Place to Live? 2
Chevron – A Richmond Enigma 5
A House Divided - Sometimes 8
Richmond Advances and Stumbles in 2007 10
Tom Butt Nominations for 2007 Advances 10
Tom Butt Nominations for 2007 Stumbles 13
E-FORUM Reader Nominations for 2007 Advances 15
E-FORUM Reader Nominations for 2007 Stumbles 15
Development Projects During 2007 16
E-FORUM Reader Nominations for Best 2007 Development Projects 16
E-FORUM Reader Nominations for Worst 2007 Development Projects 16
E-FORUM Reader Nominations for Best 2007 Organizations 16
City Employees 17
City Employees Nominated by E-FORUM Readers for Roses 17
City Employees Nominated by E-FORUM Readers for Garlic 17
City Departments, Policies and Services 17
City Departments, Policies and Services Nominated by E-FORUM Readers for Roses 17
Police 17
City Manager 18
Public Works 18
Code Enforcement 18
Tom Butt E-FORUM 18
City Departments, Policies and Services Nominated by E-FORUM Readers for Garlic 18
City Council 18
All Departments 19
Public Works 19
Special Award for a Citizen 19
2008 Predictions from E-FORUM Readers 21
How did E-FORUM Readers 2007 Predictions turn out? 21
How Did We Do on My Wishes for 2007? 21
My wishes for 2007 seem to fit into three categories: cleaner, leaner or greener 21
Tom Butt Wishes for 2008 23

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.
- This year, it was Will Richmond be Heaven in 2007? January 1, 2007.

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 based on a scientific poll or survey by any standard, although the 2007 *City of Richmond Citizen Survey* has proven to be useful tool in evaluating, as never before, the state of mind of Richmond residents. Some of what I have written 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.

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

Top Three Richmond Stories of 2007

Last year, it was easier to pick out singular events for this review. This year it is much different, so I have selected three broad themes that are collections of many stories that played out throughout 2007 and will continue to evolve in 2008 and beyond. They are at once both complex and subtle, as well as a mixture of both reality and perception.

City of Crime and Violence or a Cool Place to Live?

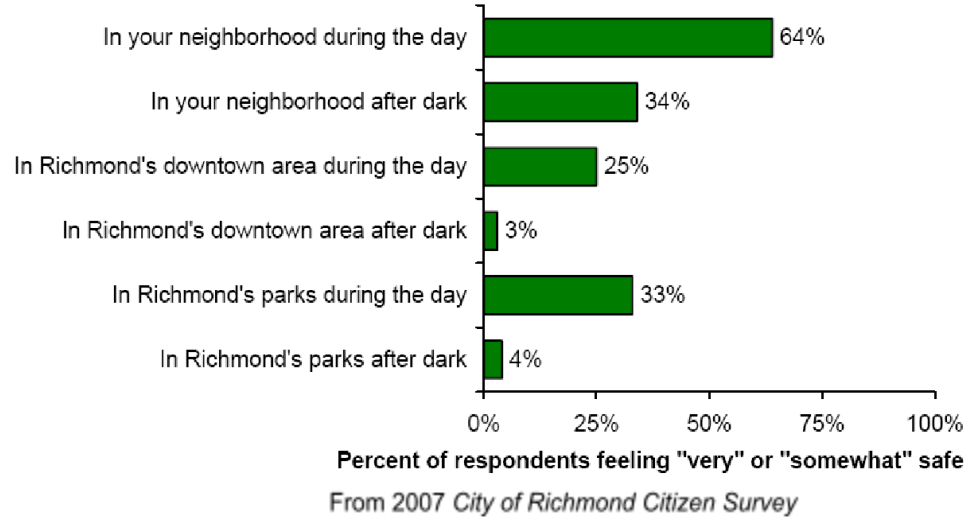
Richmond has always struggled with its image. Ten years ago, I explored this subject in a paper I wrote to try to better understand the challenges and opportunities to change both the image and reality of this remarkable city. Click here to read it.

Then, as now, Richmond was defined by violence, although the circumstances were remarkably different. In 1998, Richmond had completed a three-year run of dramatic decreases in homicides, (62, 46, 52 and 52 in years 1991-1994 versus 26, 34 and 30 in years 1995-1997), yet the *City of Richmond Image Survey* found that crime, drugs, gangs and violence dominated opinions about the most serious problem in Richmond.[1] Similarly, respondents listed crime, drugs and violence as the things for which Richmond was best known, according to respondents who live or work in Richmond.[2]

As this is being written, homicides have climbed back up to a new high of 47 for year 2007, the highest since 1994 and the highest since I began serving on the city Council. In 2007, Richmond was once again rated as one of the top ten most dangerous cities in the U.S. based on 2006 statistics. See Richmond Ties Last Year's Homicide Record, December 16, 2007.

The 2007 *City of Richmond Citizen Survey* showed that safety was a huge concern of Richmond residents, especially "downtown" and after dark. In the list of relative importance of issues for the City to address, the second highest rating went to increasing police staffing," with 98%, following only "improving street paving conditions" with 99% responding "essential" to "somewhat important."

Figure 10: Ratings of Safety in Various Areas in Richmond



From 2007 *City of Richmond Citizen Survey*

The 2007 *City of Richmond Citizen Survey* not only confirmed residents' concern about safety, it confirmed a broad dissatisfaction with conditions in general and a perception of the quality of life that was lower than in any of the other 212 cities that participated in similar surveys. See City Survey Reports, June 4, 2007 and

[1] *Image Campaign, Marketing Richmond, CA* (Richmond: VSW Associates, undated)
[2] *Image Campaign, Marketing Richmond, 1996 Richmond Image Survey* (Richmond: VSW Associates, undated), 7

Richmond Survey Shows Rock Bottom Satisfaction with City Services and Quality of Life, June 2, 2007.
The following is from the E-FORUM June 2, 2007.

> Following the mailing of a pre-survey notification postcard to a random sample of 3,000 households, surveys were mailed to the same residences approximately one week later. A reminder letter and a new survey were sent to the same households after two weeks. Residents were also able to complete the survey on the Internet. Approximately 141 postcards were undeliverable due to "vacant" or "not found" addresses. Of the 2,859 eligible households, 610 completed the survey, providing a response rate of 21%. Of the 610, 594 written surveys were received and 16 surveys were completed online. Typically, the response rates obtained on citizen surveys range from 20% to 40%.
>
> I have extracted at the end of this message the staff summary of the survey results, which will accompany a public presentation at the June 5 City Council meeting. While the relative attitude about myriad things, as summarized in the staff report, is extremely useful in setting public policy priorities, the real news is the abysmally low esteem residents have for almost everything related to quality of life and services in Richmond.
>
> Perhaps I should not have been surprised that when asked to rate the overall quality of life in Richmond, only 1% of respondents thought it was “excellent” and thirty-six percent rated overall quality of life as “poor.” In category after category, substantially less than 50% of those surveyed had positive perceptions of Richmond.
>
> But what really caught my attention is that when the Richmond results were compared to those same questions asked in surveys of other cities across the country, Richmond residents’ level of satisfaction with virtually every municipal quality or service came in either dead last or close to it. For example, of 43 cities between 64,000 and 149,999 where the question “How do you rate the overall quality of life” was asked, Richmonders rated themselves 27 out of a possible 100, coming in dead last. When compared to 212 cities of all sizes, Richmond was still dead last.
>
> In fact, in only two categories did Richmond even rise above the 50th percentile, ease of bus travel and availability of public parking.
>
> The depth and breadth of malaise in Richmond truly surprised me.
>
> If there is any good news in this, it is that we are so far down that we have nowhere to go but up. For anyone but an optimist, it would be devastating.

While violence and public safety clearly are a priority, there is a great danger in obsessing so much over this challenge that everything else we need to do to raise the quality of life gets placed on hold.

There are those who see the solution as dramatically increasing the police force, although we can’t hire enough new officers to fill even the positions currently budgeted. Others see the solution as raising police salary and benefits enough to provide an offer that can’t be refused. See Council Veers Toward Reckless Spending Policies, June 1, 2007.

Activities for young people have been a rallying cry for anti-violence activists for years (“Open up the [community] centers!”). But there is evidence that having activities and successfully recruiting participants may be two different things. An ambitious plan to revive youth baseball in Richmond with a Little League consisting of as many as 16 teams of 11 to 12 players each is proving to be a challenge.

> Two Richmond Little League sign-up days this month got a less-than-hoped-for turnout, and organizers are working to get the word out about the program, which has received support from local and regional groups as well as the national Little League organization. All that's needed now are kids to come out and play (*West County Times*).

The Richmond Police Department is funded at $57 million, up nearly $10 million from two years ago. $4 million has been funded for security cameras that will become operational in January 2008. Community centers are open and staffed. Library hours have been increased, and branch libraries are expected to reopen in January, 2008. We have funded an Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) at just under a million dollars annually, including some $200,000 for anti-violence programs by the Richmond Improvement Association, to try to organize a multi-agency war on violence (See FLASH - Lindsay Hires DeVone Boggan as Neighborhood Safety Director, September 25, 2007 and City of Richmond Marks Financial Advances; Funds Office of Neighborhood Safety, July 20, 2007). But critics are already slamming both Boggan and the ONS for not stopping homicides instantly, not to mention the City Council, mayor and police chief. Boggan only started working October 23, just over two months ago and is still assembling his staff.

The Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency believes we can build ourselves out of the violence crises, pushing big box stores and their sales tax revenue as the resources Richmond desperately needs to buy peace.

There is an interesting feature in the on-line *Contra Costa Times* stories that allows reader feedback. All Richmond homicide-related stories get a lot of comments. No one knows who these commentators are or whether or not they are at all representative of the public as a whole. All we know is that they read the *Contra Costa Times* on line and have an opinion. Their comments (Click here for a sample) follow two main themes;

1. Racism, i.e., it's the blacks and Hispanics. All kinds of reprehensible solutions are proposed.
2. The City Council, mayor, police chief and neighborhood safety director have failed to provide leadership to "do something," and need to be removed. I have an idea some of the commentators are affiliated with the Richmond Police Department and are using the forum as a way to further intradepartmental grudges and blame Chief Magnus, whom they like to call "Chief Minus." Somehow the city manager gets a pass.

No positive and realistic solutions are offered. Instead we get things like "Declare martial law." One sub-theme that is commonly heard even in Council meetings is a criticism of City leadership for doing anything at all other than preventing homicides:

> As the murders in Richmond increase, the Mayor has her staff exploring ways to ban styrofoam. Gayle, right now there is not one other problem in Richmond. Styrofoam means nothing, pretending there is a need for a ferry just to get funds for a Marina Bay grade separation is a waste of time and what the hell are toothless resolutions on Iraq going to accomplish? Step aside, Mayor, call in the feds and hand them the keys. You have proven yourself to be unresponsive to Richmond's real needs (From an anonymous *West County Times* Commentator).

There are those who see any resources dedicated to other than public safety as wasteful or frivolous.

At the end of the day, I think Richmond is little like Iraq. The violence will end when the neighborhoods quit blaming the City Council, the mayor, the police chief and Devone Boggan for not stopping it. The City can only help those who help themselves. The families, friends and neighbors know who has the guns and who has used them or will use them.

An article in the *Richmond Globe*, "Seeking Solutions to Black on Black Crime," (Deborah Mitchell, *December 26, 2007)* said the same thing:

> Programs to reduce street and gun violence and promote safe neighborhoods are underway, and their success depends on the participation of citizens in every community.

On December 16, in a *West County Times* article, Rev. Shumake, head of the Richmond Improvement Association and a vocal anti-violence advocate was quoted:

> "It's beyond a policing problem," Shumake said. "It starts in the home. It starts in the community. We in the community have to be responsible. These are our sons, our nephews, our cousins that are going out and committing these crimes. We need to stop that."

Which brings me to another vision of Richmond's present and future, "a cool place to live." (See A Cool Place to Live, June 5, 2007). While we have to find a way to diminish this pervasive violence that dominates a few central Richmond neighborhoods, we will never have a satisfactory quality of life if we obsess on violence and neglect everything else. Richmond without violence could still be just a safer but still dirty, polluted, boring, ugly and dysfunctional city. We have to make Richmond both a safer city and a cool place to live. From a June 5, 2007 E-FORUM:

> I was in Memphis over the weekend, and I came across the article copied below. It caught my attention because there are lessons for Richmond that are apropos to both the recent citywide survey and the General Plan Update. The person quoted in the article, Leland Speed, is a real estate investor who chairs two REITS, Today, Speed chairs Parkway Properties, Inc. (NYSE: PKY), an office REIT with 2002 revenues of $156 million, and EastGroup Properties, Inc. (NYSE: EGP), an industrial REIT with 2002 revenues of $106 million. According to Smith Barney, Parkway's compound annual return since 1994 has been 23.5 percent, the highest in the REIT industry. In the industrial sector, EastGroup has outperformed its competitors for eight of the last nine years.
>
> Speed repeats a philosophy that I have embraced for a long time. If you want a city to be successful, you have to make it attractive and focus on quality of life, not just bringing in new business. Speed advised communities to deal with their "cruel realities;" "quit worrying about what you don't have," and "focus on what you have."
>
> Speed concludes, "Cities aren't just competing for companies anymore; they're competing for workers. For inhabitants. For those people who make a house — or a city — a home."
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> In Richmond, City government obsesses over bringing "economic development" (jobs and taxes) while too often taking for granted or ignoring what we do have, such as a national park, 32 miles of San Francisco Bay shoreline, the most Bay Trail completed of any city on the Bay, an extraordinary arts community, lots of historic resources, some unique and attractive neighborhoods, the Richmond Greenway – to name a few.
>
> At the end of the day, Richmond will make it if our city is a "cool place to live." WalMart and Target are not a critical part of that coolness. Nor is developing pristine shoreline open space, expanding the capacity of a refinery, diminishing citizen participation in the Design Review process, or increasing truck and train traffic to serve the Port of Richmond.
>
> Think about it.

The struggle between obsessing on violence and devoting resources to make Richmond a cool place to live will continue to play out in 2008. Hopefully, both will see improvement.

Chevron – A Richmond Enigma

I used to say Chevron owned Richmond for a hundred years. But, on reflection, it was more like a marriage. This was no shotgun wedding; it was a marriage of convenience. Each partner thought they were getting something valuable from the relationship. But it might have just been good sex, and a marriage can't survive forever on that alone.

For most of the 20th Century, City Hall might as well have been an annex to the Refinery Administration Building. Chevron was Richmond's largest taxpayer (…and don't you forget it!) and Richmond's largest employer (a lot of Chevron employees actually lived in Richmond in those days). All this good will was consummated annually at the Chevron Christmas Party, where the invite list was Richmond's version of the social register, and the happy couple lovingly renewed their vows year after year.

But Chevron had a mid-life crisis in the late 1990s. The company started flirting with other priorities and testing the waters of its relationship with Richmond, probing to see how far it could push without breaking the matrimonial bonds.

Perhaps we should have anticipated some rocky times when the annual Christmas Party ended. Then, the refinery manager, who had always been a fixture on the Richmond social scene and a player on the City's community organization's boards, went from distinction to obscurity. He was replaced by a team of "external affairs" folks who handed out candy to good little boys and girls while reminding them to not get out of line.

Under this new relationship, Chevron launched its first property tax reduction assault nearly ten years ago, but the couple kissed and made up after Chevron kept the cash flowing for a few years and gave Richmond a one-time anniversary gift of a couple of million dollars to learn to live on less.

When Richmond ratcheted up its utility user tax at mid-year several years ago, Chevron was the only taxpayer that refused to pay the increase. When the 2004 budget crisis looked like the end of the road for Richmond, Chevron's CEO spurned a tête-à-tête invitation from the city manager to discuss a bailout, earning the enmity of a few Council members for this unforgivable disrespect. When the City Council majority selected Upstream as the Point Molate developer, Chevron sued – and lost. In 2006, Chevron fought and helped defeat the City Council's effort to raise revenues through business license tax reform. Chevron also tried but failed to keep Gayle McLaughlin from becoming Richmond's next mayor – not a good strategic move.

The couple was clearly drifting apart, but 2007, the year of obscenely record profits for Chevron, might have been the year that divorce became inevitable. When one spouse gets a big raise but refuses to share it, you know trouble is brewing. The year got off to a bad start on January 15 when an early morning fire erupted at the Chevron Refinery and the warning system once again malfunctioned. There was an effort to hold Chevron responsible for the consequences of such events, and a move was made to declare the Refinery a public nuisance when upsets occur, but:

> As one might expect, the usual cast of characters, the Chamber of Commerce, Council of Industries and Chevron spoke against the plan. Richmond residents spoke in favor. Council members bobbed and weaved, waffled and babbled. Several suitably vague substitute motions emerged. In the end, Nat Bates' motion to do nothing until we "hear from Chevron" carried the day. I believe that Bates' motion was supported by all council members except McLaughlin, Thurmond and me. I thought that we might have recently turned a corner in the 100-year old domination of the City Council by Chevron, but last night was just like the old days (January 24, 2007 E-FORUM).

The marriage was barely saved, but the relationship continued to deteriorate.

The next domestic quarrel involved the Bay Trail connection across I-580. After the 2006 death and serious injury of bicyclists on the freeway shoulder bicycle trail, pressure was put on Chevron to honor their

previous commitment for an off-freeway bicycle trail route. This time, the City Council voted overwhelmingly against Chevron's interests:

> The Richmond City Council came down strongly for the San Francisco Bay Trail last night (March 20) by voting 8/0/1 to ask the State Lands Commission (SLC) to require Chevron to provide land and pay part of the cost for the planned Bay Trail to Point Molate before granting a new 30-year lease of State sub tidal lands for continued operation of the Long Wharf. The resolution introduced by Councilman Butt with Mayor McLaughlin and Councilman Rogers & Thurmond as cosponsors was moved and seconded by Councilors Bates and Viramontes. No one seconded Councilman Marquez's substitute motion to hold the item over for 60 days and meet with Chevron. This motion would have left the City with no position or legal standing when the State Lands Commission votes to approve a new 30-year lease for Long Wharf. The main motion then carried with 8 ayes and Marquez abstaining (March 25, 2007, E-FORUM).

Although the Bay Trail issue remains unresolved, Chevron has been a participant in a committee that has focused on the original 2004 alignment of the trail to which Chevron had previously agreed.

As mid-year approached, Chevron once again elected to pay their utility user tax using the option they had engineered into the ordinance in 1984 to save themselves some $4 million and to deprive the City of Richmond the same amount in badly needed revenue. When the City asked for back up information showing how Chevron computed its tax liability, the company refused. A lawsuit by the City was averted only when City Council members reluctantly agreed to sign a confidentiality agreement that essentially reaffirmed what is already state law.

Confirmation that Chevron pollution is a legitimate environmental justice issue was a fitting prelude to an application by Chevron for a conditional use permit to expand and alter the refinery to increase some pollutants even more.

> A new study entitled "Still Toxic After All These Years, Air Quality and Environmental Justice in the San Francisco Bay Area," by the Center for Justice, Tolerance and Community, University of California, Santa Cruz, confirms what we always knew – that poor and minority communities, including Richmond, are far more exposed to air pollution and its negative health impacts than other communities. One proposal that has come out of the study is assessing the impact of new facilities based on their cumulative effect on air quality rather than the conformance of the individual facility to emission standards.

Chevron's expansion application ran into a host of roadblocks, coming to a screeching stop as the year 2007 ended. Not used to actually conforming to the same laws and regulations as regular folks, Chevron appeared dazed and confused by the lack of traditional governmental cooperation and acquiescence. Attorney General Jerry Brown helped upset the oil cart by threatening to sue if Chevron didn't mitigate an increase in greenhouse gases to conform to state policy.

While Chevron badly needed Richmond's cooperation and good will for processing a flawed conditional use permit application, the company continued to slap around its Richmond spouse by pursuing yet another property tax reduction appeal that, if successful, could cost the City of Richmond $7 million.

Sensing a need to reconcile with its domestic partner, Chevron called in the local version of Dr. Phil, adding former County Supervisor Tom Powers and former County Administrator/ Interim City Manager Phil Batchelor to its local advisors (Zell & Associates) on how to get along with the City of Richmond. Word is that Chevron is not listening to any of them, preferring to find its own way back.

What will 2008 bring? Will Richmond, like a battered spouse, keep coming back for more domestic violence, fearing the alternative of a separation it has never known? Or will Richmond stand up to the batterer and defend itself, eventually seeking restitution and a better life? We'll see. How this ends is in the hands of at least four City Council members and the mayor.

For details of a year living with Chevron, see the following:

Communications Breakdown as Chevron Fire Causes Shelter in Place Warning, January 15, 2007, Officials Acknowledge Community Warning System: System Failed to Function Properly, January 16, 2007, More Chevron Fire Information, January 15, 2007, All Clear at 8:46 AM, January 15, 2007, Broken Alert System Needs Major Repair, January 15, 2007, Text of Resolution for City Council Meeting of January 23, 2007, Relating to Penalties for Activation of Community Warning System, January 19, 2007, Community Meeting on Chevron Fire, January 19, 2007, WCT Editorializes on Warning System Failure - Community Meeting Scheduled, January 18, 2007, City Council Takes Up Collection to Pay CAER Membership, January 24, 2007, City Council Fails to Hold Chevron Responsible - Again, January 24, 2007, Connecting the Spots, January 27, 2007, Lawsuit Promised Over Bicyclist's Death, January 27, 2007, Jim Rogers Response to Chevron Fire, January 29, 2007, Poor and Minority Community Bear Disproportionate Share of Pollution, February 18, 2007, Forwarded from Councilmember Jim Rogers, "Richmond Dangerfield?", March 11, 2007, Long Wharf EIR Dashes Hopes for Bay Trail Link, March 11, 2007, City Council Says Yes to Bay Trail, No to Chevron, March 25, 2007, Bay Trail Access Article in Today's Berkeley Daily Planet, March 27, 2007, Bay Trail to Point Molate Pits Everyone Against Chevron, April 2, 2007, SF Chronicle Editorializes Chevron Trail Impasse, April 3, 2007, Chevron Received Variance from Inspection of Pipe Corrosion Prior to Fire, April 20, 2007, Chevron Fire Root Cause Analysis, April 19, 2007, No Comment from Chevron, April 19, 2007, Long Awaited Chevron Energy & Hydrogen Renewal Project EIR is Out, May 23, 2007, Chevron Article from East Bay Express, May 30, 2007, Planning Commission to Hear Comments on Chevron Expansion EIR Tonight, June 7, 2007, Hazards of Living Near Refineries and Rail Yards, June 9, 2007, Chronicle's Chip Johnson on Chevron Expansion, June 8, 2007, Chevron Seeks Exemption From Energy Commission for Power Plant Expansion, July 11, 2007, High Security at Chevron, July 10, 2007, Chevron Unable to Back Up Claims Made in Letter to KPFA, July 21, 2007, $839,000 For a Fatally Flawed EIR? July 21, 2007, State Budget Impasse Linked to Chevron EIR, July 26, 2007, Workshop on Chevron Expansion, July 26, 2007, Chevron Community Website Runs Out of Gas, August 4, 2007, Picking on Poor Chevron? September 2, 2007, Hearings on Chevron Power Plant and Health Consequences of Train and Truck Traffic, September 22, 2007, Nothing Like a School Day in a Refinery Town - Richmond and Martinez Children Practice Shelter-In-Place, September 25, 2007, Petition Drive Seeks to Place Refinery Tax on Ballot, September 29, 2007, Chevron Puts Short Cut to Power Plant Approval on Hold, October 31, 2007, Chevron Property Tax Appeal Could Cost Richmond Millions, November 25, 2007, Gioia Asks Chevron to Withdraw Property Tax Appeal, November 30, 2007, Attorney General Jerry Brown Writes City of Richmond Urging Resolution of Discrepancies in Chevron EIR, December 13, 2007, Ed and Op Ed on Chevron Tax Appeal, December 8, 2007, Selling the Energy and Hydrogen Renewal Project, December 7, 2007, Design Review Board Consideration of Chevron Project is Cancelled, December 7, 2007, Chevron and Design Review, December 7, 2007, Christmas Card from Chevron, December 7, 2007, Chronicle's Chip Johnson Discovers Christmas Grinch at Chevron Headquarters, December 7, 2007, Chevron Defenders Strike Back, December 16, 2007.

A House Divided - Sometimes

The victory of Mayor McLaughlin was one of the top Richmond stories of 2006. The aftermath is not so stunning but is perhaps equally captivating as City Council members continue to posture and jockey for

position, recognition and leadership in preparation for an election in November 2008 that will leave at least two of them out in the cold.

The media fascination with McLaughlin and Richmond's foray into a green future continues to give journalists something to focus on other than homicides, for which we should all be grateful. See, for example, SF Chronicle on Richmond Inauguration, January 10, 2007, San Francisco Chronicle Magazine Features 8-page Spread on Green Richmond, July 22, 2007, Text of "Reclaiming Richmond", July 22, 2007, Green Chamber of Commerce Comes to Richmond, September 25, 2007, Successful Green Chamber of Commerce Exhibition, October 23, 2007, East Bay Green Corridor Partnership Launched in Richmond's Historic Ford Building, December 4, 2007, Richmond Featured in USA Today Article on Green Collar Jobs, December 15, 2007.

Jealous of this media attention focused on the mayor, other Council members at first tried to demonstrate their independence and power by staking out contravening policy positions, such as jettisoning operable windows in the new City Hall and canning the Design Review Board. But it didn't play well out in the neighborhoods or in the media. The group looked less like leaders and more like losers. See Viramontes Five Defies Experts and Votes to Seal Up Rehabilitated City Hall, June 5, 2007, Richmond Aghast at Behavior of Viramontes Five, June 6, 2007, Your Chance to Help Out Two of the Viramontes Five, June 6, 2007, June 9, 2007, Windows into the Past, July 3, 2007.

Then they realized that green was good and decided that if you can't fight 'em, join 'em. See City Council in Greening Frenzy, September 19, 2007.

Former *West County Times* reporter John Geluardi provided a good profile of a current City Council in his final piece as he departed for the *San Francisco Weekly* in September. Geluardi describes a body that has been remarkably effective despite some major stumbles (See State of the City, by John Geluardi As He Leaves for SF Weekly, August 18, 2007).

> The council's composition changed dramatically after the November election, with Green Party member Gayle McLaughlin winning the nonpartisan mayor's seat after serving two years as a councilwoman. With very little money, McLaughlin unseated Mayor Irma Anderson, who had a formidable campaign war chest stuffed with contributions from Chevron.
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> McLaughlin's membership in the Green Party has had no effect on her ability to find common ground with her council colleagues, who have been like-minded on many environmental and social issues.
>
> McLaughlin also has been successful at increasing grass-roots participation at City Council and community meetings, which has helped to somewhat loosen the stranglehold industry, developers and city unions have long had on city policy.
> Council neophytes Ludmyrna Lopez and Harpreet Sandhu still are finding their way on the council and largely have voted in lockstep with their council mentors, Viramontes, Councilman John Marquez and, to a lesser degree, Vice Mayor Nat Bates.
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>
> Those five form the council majority and often vote in opposition to a loose-knit rival faction of McLaughlin and Councilmen Tom Butt, Tony Thurmond and occasionally Jim Rogers.
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> Despite the dustups, the council has successfully continued to regain the respect of city residents and the Bay Area
> .
> Perhaps most significantly, the city regained its favored bond ratings from both Moody's Investor Service and Standard & Poors, thanks to

the council's consistent fiscal discipline. The favored bond rating is doubtless a sign of financial recovery from a $35 million budget crisis in 2004 that resulted from six years of gross mismanagement under former City Manager Isiah Turner.

The council also doubled the annual funding for critically needed street repairs and launched the $111 million first phase of the Civic Center renovation.

Under McLaughlin's leadership, Richmond has become more environmentally friendly. The council rolled out the welcome mat to green businesses by declaring Richmond a Green Economic Development Area, reduced solar fees to the lowest in the Bay Area and approved the Green Building Ordinance, which governs construction of all city-funded projects greater than $300,000.

The council formed the Office of Neighborhood Safety to coordinate anti-violence programs among city departments, the West Contra Costa Unified School District and nonprofit groups.

And the council took steps to get the Chevron Refinery to verify its annual utility users tax payment. In July 2006, the refinery suddenly and without explanation reduced its payment by $4 million, dealing the city a financial blow as it recovered from its budget crisis.

Although the council was thoughtful and effective on the majority of issues, there were times during the past seven months when good government took a back seat to personal bickering. Name-calling and spite votes were costly for residents, employees and the city's long-suffering image.

The best example is the council's 5-4 vote against windows that open -- also called "operable windows" -- in the renovated Civic Center. In June, the council majority voted down operable windows despite a presentation by a nationally respected environmental engineer on employee health and productivity benefits of an operable-window system.

Operable windows have been popular in civic buildings across the country and particularly in the Bay Area. The council's narrow rejection reaffirmed an image of petty personal politics and backwardness the city has been struggling to overcome.

2008 will be an interesting year. Will campaign posturing and personal power struggles characterize the year to come, or will teamwork and leadership prevail?

Richmond Advances and Stumbles in 2007

Tom Butt Nominations for 2007 Advances

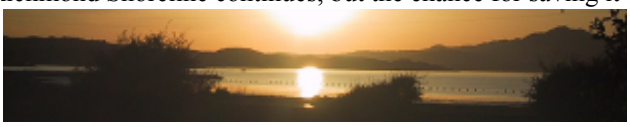
My choice for the best of Richmond in 2007 includes the following, not in any particular order:

- City Manager Bill Lindsay's contract was renewed for another four years.
- The City conducted its first ever Community Survey. There was little good news, but it provided a great "to do" list and eliminated any perception by staff and Council members that we are doing a great job. We have lots of work to do. See Richmond Survey Shows Rock Bottom Satisfaction with City Services and Quality of Life, June 2, 2007, Additional Survey Information, June 4, 2007 and City Survey Reports, June 4, 2007.
- The City Council adopted a balanced budget for FY 2007-2008. See City Adopts $137 Million Balanced General Fund Budget With Little Acrimony, June 28, 2007 and City of Richmond Adopted 2007-2008 Budget On-Line.
- Chief Magnus was cleared of accusations of racially motivated harassment. See Nice LA Times Piece on Chief Magnus, January 2, 2007; CNN on Richmond Police Department Harassment Investigation, January 30, 2007,

Press Statement on Police Lawsuit, March 5, 2007, SF Chronicle on Chief Magnus, April 3, 2007 and Police Chief Probe Completed - City Council Briefed on Findings, July 18, 2007.

- The Police Department started the year with a failing grade for responding to public records request but later moved to the head of the class. See Richmond Police Dept receives F+ for Requests for Records, January 13, 2007 and Richmond Police Go From "F" to "A" in Public Records Request Response, November 30, 2007.
- The Police Department continued to upgrade its internal and external crime information capabilities. See Richmond COPS, March 25, 2007, Crimeview Up and Running, September 19, 2007 and Richmond Police Department Monthly Update on Website, September 25, 2007.
- This may not be good news for container port aficionados, but I am glad that the quest for a container port in Richmond continued to falter. See Container Port Plan B, January 6, 2007, Newest Container Port Proposal Fully Launched, March 1, 2007, Container Port Proposal Draws Comments from BCDC and Project Proponents, March 7, 2007 and JP Morgan Back in Richmond Looking for a Few Good Dollars, March 25, 2007.

- More Quiet Zones were implemented. See Railroad Finally Caves on West II Quiet Zone, January 12, 2007, South Railroad Quiet Zone Due May 1, April 10, 2007, Richmond Web Site for Railroad Quiet Zone Information, April 18, 2007, Marina Bay (South One) Quiet Zone Delayed, April 30, 2007 and Media Doesn't Get Quiet Zones, July 22, 2007.
- Ultimately, the City Council hung together on Point Richmond Shores and helped set the stage to craft a long overdue resolution that was accepted by both Toll Brothers and the community. See Coalition of Concerned Citizens Sues Over Point Richmond Shores, January 13, 2007, Toll Brothers Lavishes Money on Dublin, Stiffs Richmond, January 27, 2007 and City Council Unanimously Approves Point Richmond Shores, June 21, 2007.
- COR Connect became a successful tool for the public to report and track things needing City attention. See Code Enforcement - Where to Find It, January 29, 2007.
- The struggle over the fate of the North Richmond Shoreline continues, but the chance for saving it is looking up. See North Richmond Shoreline Coalition Workshop, February 14, 2007, Richmond Shoreline Film Festival: Thursday June 21st 6:30 PM - 9 PM, June 9, 2007, Richmond Chamber of Commerce Prefers Cheap Tilt-ups and Housing Sprawl Along Richmond's Last Undeveloped Shoreline, November 2, 2007.



- Recreation and Parks Commission received awards: See Recreation & Parks Commission Receives Back to Back Awards, March 13, 2007.
- The process of creating a new General Plan for Richmond continues in full swing.
- Progress continued on Richmond's portion of the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Richmond Greenway. See Richmond Bay Trail New Year Report, January 11, 2007, Coho Salmon Along the Bay Trail in Richmond, March 7, 2007, Bay Trail Calendar of Events Along Richmond's Shoreline, March 7, 2007, Richmond Bay Trail Ahead by a Mile! July 15, 2007, Exciting New Calendar of Bay Trail Events in Richmond, September 9, 2007, TRAC Brings National Award to Richmond, September 13, 2007, Updated Richmond Bay Trail Calendar, October 28, 2007, May 16 Richmond Greenway Grand Opening, May 15, 2007, Richmond Greenway Debuts, May 17, 2007, Community Organizations Collaborate in Use of New Richmond Greenway, August 30, 2007, Richmond Kids Making Green, September 24, 2007, Bringing the Richmond Greenway to Life, November 11, 2007, Two of Chronicle's Eight "Perfect Picnics" For Memorial Day are in Richmond, May 24, 2007.

- City Council packets were made available on-line to the public. See City Council Full Agenda Packets Now Available Via Internet, June 21, 2007.

- It was a big year for preserving Richmond's rich history and exploiting it to attract visitors and events to the City:

1. Rehabilitation of the Red Oak Victory continued, and visitation increased. See Red Oak Victory to be Featured in Eye on the Bay. January 11, 2007, SF Chronicle on Richmond's Red Oak Victory, February 12, 2007.
2. Richmond became a Certified Local Government. See Richmond Certified Local Government Application Successful, January 25, 2007.
3. National Park Signage was erected on I-580. See After Six Years, National Park Signs Go Up, January 27, 2007.

4. Children's Art from WWII child care centers in Richmond was displayed at Bay Area venues. See Childrens Art a Legacy of Richmond's Shipyard History, January 29, 2007, Childrens Art from Richmond's WW II Child Care Centers at Oakland Museum, Shipyard April 23, 2007 and Era Children's Art Exhibit and Reception, September 21, 2007.
5. A project to ultimately erect historical interpretive signage on Macdonald Avenue began, See Memories of Macdonald on KQED, February 2, 2007.

6. East Brother Light Station continued to attract visitors and good publicity to Richmond: See Bay Crossings Touts East Brother, February 5, 2007, Latest News from Richmond's Most Famous Island, March 5, 2007, What We Do For Fun - Pumping Out East Brother, May 11, 2007, Buy a Brother a Drink, August 19, 2007, Richmond Youth Help Keep Island Afloat, August 21, 2007, Island in the Sun, October 9, 2007 and See Richmond's East Brother Lighthouse on "The Islands of San Francisco Bay" TV shows, October 27, 2007.
7. Richmond's National Park is recognized as a steward of African American history. See African Americans in Richmond during WWII, February 21, 2007 and Richmond National Park Lauded as a Steward of African-American History, February 25, 2007.
8. The Maritime Child Care Center rehabilitation was fully funded. See City Council Cements Maritime Center Funding, February 22, 2007 and Rep. Miller Announces Initial Approval of Supplemental Funding for Maritime Center, June 25, 2007.

9. The Ford Assembly Building became fully leased and with green businesses as a bonus. The craneway began successful use as an event venue. See Greening of Richmond Business, March 13, 2007 and Ford Point Building Craneway East Bay's Largest Event Venue, Snowball and Senior Ball Fill Ford Plant Craneway, December 14, 2007.
10. Rehabilitation of the former Santa Fe Reading Room was completed, including a landscaped plaza forming an entrance to Point Richmond. See Mechanics Bank Moves to Historic Relocated Railroad Building, March 31, 2007, Mechanics Bank Historic Preservation Project Passes Final City Approval, April 26, 2007, ABC 7/KGO TV Covers Trainmaster Building Rehabilitation, June 21, 2007, Restored Santa Fe Reading Room to be Reborn as Mechanics Bank on October 29, October 25, 2007, Banking on Preservation, October 30, 2007 and Mechanics Bank Hits Home Run With Reading Room Rehabilitation, December 5, 2007.
11. Touchable Stories gave an artsy twist to Richmond history. See Too Much to Do and Not Enough Time, April 20, 2007, Touchable Stories - Richmond: The Story

Continues... October 28, 2007 and News From Touchable Stories, November 22, 2007.

12. The impediments the Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency put in the way of preserving history at the Miraflores site almost made me list this in the "stumbles" column, but I'll be optimistic and add it in here. See Miraflores Charrette Next Wednesday, April 21, 2007, Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency Competes for Title of City's Worst Slumlord, May 18, 2007, City Property Looted, Vandalized and Dumped On, May 23, 2007, Sayonara to Sakai, August 1, 2007, Miraflores EIR Scoping Meeting September 26, 2007, September 13, 2007, Richmond History in the News, November 6, 2007, Richmond Seeks Developer for Miraflores, November 8, 2007 and SF Chronicle Profiles Miraflores Site, November 25, 2007.

13. Point Richmond, which is "old town Richmond," and is a historical district listed on the National Register of Historical Places, continued to use its ambiance for events that attracted visitors from all over. See Help Plan and Run the Point Richmond Summer Music Festival, February 9, 2007, All New 2007 Point Richmond Free Summer Music Festival Starts This Friday, June 4, 2007, The War and the Richmond

14. Home Front, September 1, 2007, Call for Artists for the Home Front Festival, August 31, 2007, Bay Area Press Celebrates Point Richmond and KCRT, May 10, 2007, 18th Annual Point Richmond Stroll, May 12, 2007, Chronicle Touts Charm of Richmond Neighborhood, June 7, 2007, Get Lucky at Friday 13th Point Richmond Music Festival, July 10, 2007, Point Richmond Music Festival Season Finale on August 13, August 4, 2007 and Indian Statue Day in Point Richmond Saturday, October 13, 2007, October 12, 2007.
15. Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park continued to attract visitors and positive publicity and was cited as Richmond's No. 1 visitor draw, culminating with the Home front Festival and an ornament on the White House Christmas Tree. See Richmond Convention and Visitors Bureau Cites National Park as Richmond's No. 1 Draw, July 20, 2007, Home Front Festival by the Bay, May 12, 2007, Save the Date for the Home Front Festival - September 28-29-30,August 2, 2007, Home Front Festival Update - September 28-29-30, August 6, 2007, Festival Excitement, August 11, 2007, Author Emily Yellin of "Our Mothers' War" Tapped for Home Front Festival Keynote Speaker, August 17, 2007, Our Families' Home Front Stories, September 4, 2007, Anticipation Builds for Home Front Festival, SF Chronicle on Ken Burns Series "The War" Describes Transformation of Richmond from Village to Industrial Giant, September 16, 2007, One Week To Home Front Festival, September 21, 2007,Home Front Festival Starts Tonight - Media Coverage Intensifies, September 28, 2007, Festival Brings Thousands to Richmond for History and Sunshine, October 1, 2007, Ken Burns "The War" Sparks Interest in WWII Sites, Including Richmond's National Park, October 9, 2007, Bus Tours of Richmond's National Park, June 26, 2007, Summer National Park Tours a Big Hit in Richmond, July 29, 2007, Welcome to National Park Ranger Betty Reid Soskin! July 22, 2007, New Chief of Interpretation at Richmond's National Park Selected, October 25, 2007, Mapping Richmond's World War II Home Front, August 20, 2007, Interest in Richmond's National Park Soars, August 19, 2007, Richmond's National Park in the News, November 13, 2007 and Christmas Tree Ornament Honoring Richmond's National Park Displayed on White House Christmas Tree, November 30, 2007.

- Richmond was one of several National Park partners recognized with the Governor's Historic Preservation Award. See Prestigious Historic Preservation Award, September 12, 2007.
- Richmond received a Preserve America Grant, June 21, 2007.

Tom Butt Nominations for 2007 Stumbles

My nominations for worst stumbles of the City of Richmond in 2007 include the following, not in any particular order:

2. Once again, Richmond was recognized by MTC as the Bay Area city with the worst roads, See What Do Richmond and Orinda Have in Common?, December 21, 2007.
3. Richmond was still among the top ten most dangerous cities in the U.S. See East Bay Express on Richmond Homicides, January 11, 2007, Thank God for Oakland; November 19, 2007, Richmond Ties Last Year's Homicide Record, December 16, 2007.
4. The Civic Center rehabilitation should probably be in the "Advances" column, but I'm still so steamed about the operable window fiasco, I have nothing but negative thoughts. The project

started with out of control City employees looting City Hall and damaging a valuable mural. Then the police station move went 100% over budget. Then the window disaster. And the project is being run by people who are under qualified and overpaid. See Saga of the City Hall Mural, January 22, 2007, Firefighters Damage Historic Mural by Famous African-American Artist Sargent Johnson, January 20, 2007, West County Times Editorial on Sacking of Old City Hall, January 25, 2007, Mission Creep at "Temporary" Hall of Justice, Trouble in Richmond City (Civic Center)? February 13, 2007, Richmond Aghast at Behavior of Viramontes Five, June 6, 2007, Your Chance to Help Out Two of the Viramontes Five, June 6, 2007, Viramontes Five Defies Experts and Votes to Seal Up Rehabilitated City Hall, June 5, 2007, West County Times on Police Building Cost Overrun, June 9, 2007 and Windows into the Past, July 3, 2007.

Sargent Johnson Mural

5. Railroads are the bane of our existence. They are arrogant, dangerous, pollute, block streets, maintain dirty rights-of-way. The city manager and city attorney are inexplicably unwilling to take them on. See Rail Tankers Pose Threat of Massive Destruction (CC Times Headline), February 1, 2007, Community Meeting Notice: Health Risk Assessment for the BNSF Railway Company Richmond Railyard, June 28, 2007, BNSF Richmond Rail Yard Health Risk Assessment, June 10, 2007, Community Meeting - Health Risk Assessment for the BNSF Railway Company Richmond Railway, July 4, 2007, Richmond Railyard Health Risk Assessment Meeting, November 21, 2007.

6. The City Council initiated the process of dismantling the Design Review Board despite substantial community resistance. See City Council Votes to Merge Planning Commission and Design Review Board, February 24, 2007, WCT on PC/DRB Merger, Woldemar Resigns, March 15, 2007, Bye-Bye Public Review of Development Projects, May 30, 2007, Richmond Rejects Destruction of Design Review, June 6, 2007, Richmond Neighborhood Coordinating Council to Debate Design Review Board Demise, July 4, 2007 and Richmond Neighborhood Coordinating Council Rejects Proposed Design Review Changes, July 30, 2007.
7. Campaign violations of years past finally came to roost. See Vice-Mayor Solicits Donations to Pay Campaign Fines, February 27, 2007.
8. The City of Richmond still hasn't learned how to design and bid building rehabilitation projects. Not one building rehabilitation project has followed conventional models for selection of project teams, project management, design, bidding and construction. This includes The Plunge, the Civic Center, community centers and other projects. City staff simply does not know what they are doing. See Item 4, above, and Peel & Stick, April 8, 2007, Hyperlink Corrections, April 10, 2007, You Get What You Pay For, April 10, 2007, The Payoff, April 11, 2007, Roofing Scam Debate Continues, April 14, 2007.
9. City of Richmond Spends $21,230 to Send Staff and a Councilmember to China, October 14, 2007.
10. The City of Richmond has mismanaged its pipeline and utility franchises. See Information Held Secret by City Available Online from Federal Government, October 17, 2007, Secret Fuel Pipelines Crisscross Richmond, October 17, 2007, Richmond Can't Find Pipeline Franchise Agreement, December 2, 2007.

11. Richmond has suffered substantial environmental damage, but other government agencies routinely direct penalty and mitigation money elsewhere. See Agencies Mine Richmond for Environmental Damage Money to Spend Elsewhere, October 26, 2007.
12. Despite a comprehensive audit and the promise to implement changes by the end of 2007, the Planning and Building Regulations Department can't get plan checks done anywhere near the committed schedule, and can't come to grips with code enforcement obligations – among other things. See Planning and Building Department Audit, March 1, 2007 and Richmond Design Review Board Slams Planning Staff for Processing Incomplete Applications, November 2, 2007. Incidentally, I promised Maria Viramontes that I would publish the fact that she has never tried to influence a Design Review Board outcome, and I believe her.

E-FORUM Reader Nominations for 2007 Advances

- *"2007 saw continued expansion and enrichment of the San Francisco Bay Trail in Richmond, including completing 0.6 miles of new trail, opening Boat Ramp Street shoreline access, printing and disseminating Marina Bay trail guides, and, thanks to planning and design work in 2007, up to six miles of new Bay Trail could be built in 2008."*

- *"Most of the graffiti in the Point Richmond Tunnel is gone, and most of the litter along the west side of Dornan Drive above Kellers has been cleaned up. A fence was put up blocking off the last section of Dornan Drive south of the entrance to Ferry Point, which had been the hangout of troublemakers for so long. The dredges in that area don't seem to be putting out as much air pollution. Walking on Western Drive and Bishop is much safer, thanks to police patrols in that area. And so on, and so on, thanks for a wonderful series of improvements in 2007!!!"*

- *"The Bay Trail area between Pt. Isabel and the old Ford plant is looking real good. I often ride my bike along that stretch of waterfront and have watched with interest the work that's been going on especially in the section between Salute's restaurant and the Ford plant. I'm thrilled to read about the renovations of the Ford plant. Somebody certainly deserves a pat on the back for these improvements"*

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- *"Prize for the best thing that finally may be happening: Design Review Guidelines."*

- *"Mechanics Bank and all the people who volunteered for several years to bring the new bank in Pt. Richmond to completion. It is a real asset to the whole of Richmond and I know it cost the bank thousands and cost the volunteers hundreds of hours but it is a joy to see something so largely visible and so publicly beautiful in Richmond."*

- *"The Homefront Festival -- again, lots of dollars but more than that hundreds of volunteer hours and a real striving on the part of the Richmond Chamber of Commerce to do something excellent on behalf of the whole community. It is great to see people try really, really hard to achieve something for the greater good"*

E-FORUM Reader Nominations for 2007 Stumbles

- *"Rheem Avenue from 23rd to San Pablo Ave. is a street you'd expect to find in a lower third world country and it's a major connector to the hospital from a large residential area."*

- *"There still seems to be a total disconnect between the street sweepers and the enforcers of parking regulations. I guess the meter maids and men aren't willing to get up early like the sweepers, but the city would see a lot of income and the filthy streets, even in Pt. Richmond, would look a lot more like a city that cares if they'd enforce the no parking on certain days at certain times like the signs say. Check out the street below your house at the school to see how residents and guests flaunt the law. There is even a guy who leaves his car on the street and leaves it covered"*

- *"Now if we can just do something about air pollution from the Chevron Refinery (and ships tied up at the Chevron Long Wharf :-) I complained to Chevron on that pathetic form they sent us. Words fail me to describe the absurdity of their deceptive public relations effort."*
-

- *"On the other hand, if you're looking for something to fix, may I recommend a particularly frustrating traffic light at the intersection of San Pablo Avenue and Barrett? If you are headed south on San Pablo and you pull into the lefthand turn-lane in order to make a left turn onto Barrett (in order, perhaps, to head up the hill toward the Arlington), there's no telling how many light-change cycles you'll end up sitting through. The timing of that one light seems very arbitrary. Sometimes the turn-light will let three, four, or even five cars through; other times, you can be the second car waiting and still not make it. A couple of years ago, my husband was driving the second car in that turn-lane, the light changed from green to amber to red during the course of his turn, he completed his turn with a red light and promptly received a traffic ticket for it, right in front of our house with all the neighbors watching, thank you. Nowadays we pretty much avoid that light whenever we can."*

- *"Worst - all the murders, every single one."*
- *"The daylight gunfights are by far the worst and most scary."*
- *"I for one don't see a great improvement (if any) in the lessening of the violence in our city."*
- *"Prize for the most stupid idea in not just this year, but for the last several years: Merging the Planning Commission and the Design Review Board."*
- *"Of course, no review of 2007 should leave out Chevron's arrogance and high-handed behavior. When the company has its highest profits ever and when Richmond is not able to fund many needed programs due to budget constraints and after singlehandedly defeating Measure T in the last election, the company also has the unmitigated gall to appeal their tax assessment. Richmond, Contra Costa County, and the West Contra Costa USD would all love millions if they are successful. Even if they are not, it will cost the county a lot to defend the current assessment. It has been said that the behavior of a corporation with its singleminded focus on profit to the detriment of protecting the environment and giving to the community would be called sociopathic if that behavior was displayed by an individual. Chevron seems to be doing their best to prove that point."*

Development Projects During 2007

E-FORUM Reader Nominations for Best 2007 Development Projects

- *"Best Development Project? Could there be any doubt? The Trainmasters Building and entrance park to our beloved Community."*

E-FORUM Reader Nominations for Worst 2007 Development Projects

- "Toll Bros taking of shoreline for multi story projects."

E-FORUM Reader Nominations for Best 2007 Organizations

- *"NIAD and Patricia Coleman are wonderful and what that group brings out in those with disabilities is a tribute to the human spirit."*

- *"Little League."*

- *"The organization that deserves kudos is FORG, Friends of the Richmond Greenway. That group of dedicated people took on a difficult job and made it work with little or no resources from the City. What a shinning example and what a breath of fresh air that they are one group that is not standing there with their hands out looking for the City to resolve the issues. Take lessons other groups".*

- *"Richmond Gateway Foundation for beautifying the entrance to Point Richmond."*

- *"The Chamber did a nice job with the homefront festival and lost money doing it too."*

City Employees

City Employees Nominated by E-FORUM Readers for Roses

- *"Still a huge fan of our **City Manager** and **Police Chief** and **City Engineer**. Down the line **Julian Cotton** served me well on the striping on Garrard and West Richmond. Haven't met the new Public Works guy yet, but could anyone possibly replace Masterchief **Willie Haywood**?"*

- *"**Hector Rojas** of the Planning…bright, friendly, cooperative, and willing to say "How can I help you?"." There is a guy in public works who drives around in a city truck with a trailer that says plant a tree. His is the city arborist and he is into (loves) his job and trees too. He really helped with the 401 project. I think his name is **Ken Kurtain** 231-3019, I also have the name of **Steve Poluci**, and **Tony Norris** but I think the guy who I liked is Ken.*

- *"Several of us from N&E went to see **Coy Charles** in Planning: he was so very, very helpful; spent about an hour and a half with us, provided photocopies and info; and took action in my case, forcing the absentee landlord who owns the property on Humprey and 36th, which had been fire damaged and been housing bums and druggies, to get busy rebuilding the thing. Coy Charles is commendable."*

City Employees Nominated by E-FORUM Readers for Garlic

None this year.

City Departments, Policies and Services

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

Police

- *"The Police have done a great job in my part of Richmond (and elsewhere In Richmond as far as I can tell). Almost all the problems I used to see have been cleared up."*

- *"The new police chie, stepped into a harsh judgmental situation and seems to have improved things quite a bit"*

City Manager

- *"Fantastic manager - Bill Lindsay's office."*

Public Works

- *"Public Works, which actually has many people doing their jobs and repairing streets."*
- *"Best dept. the tree-trimming & maintenance dept. responds quickly to fallen trees - or parts of trees, removes and chips them on site."*
- *"I may be prejudiced but I think that the Public Works Dept. has made a fantastic impact this past year. With more resources Public Works has shown what can be accomplished. Tony Norris is the manager of the year. He has a wealth of knowledge and information coupled with experience. You add that to his positive attitude and you get a Manager that is respected amongst his peers, staff and residents. Additional resources coming down to the crews in the streets is what I feel is the best thing that has happened in Richmond. More staff the equipment needed to take care of the City. And most residents, there are always those that will never be happy, but for the most part the residents have seen the difference and appreciate the effort."*

Code Enforcement

- "Code enforcement for trying hard but they still need to sharpen their teeth and go after the incorrigibles."

Tom Butt E-FORUM

- *"You've done a wonderful job yourself!!! Many problems I complained about to You have also been cleared up."*
- *"I've been on your e-mailing list for only a few weeks, and I don't even know how I got there in the first place, but I really like your E-FORUM mailings. For the first time in years, I'm actually getting a sense of what's going on in my own hometown. My husband and I have lived in Richmond since 1985, but we've been woefully out of touch with the city since we quit attending city council meetings about ten years ago. I used to go regularly as part of our neighborhood watch group, but my work schedule got too intense, and I had to drop out. So, thank you, Tom, for sending out your e-mailings and for somehow having caused me to be placed on your list. I'd like to stay there"*

- *"You are awesome - Best Council rep this side of the Missi (oops, my cousin is in Salinas) best Council rep in the Bay Area !!!"*

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

City Council

- *"As for the rest of the city: I would say that what ever the faults of the staff, they should be laid at the door of the City Council, the great majority of whom are ignorant, incurious, unread, untraveled, know-nothings. They are like those boobs in Washington who are "guiding" the country and don't even have passports.... So naturally they know nothing about*

sustainable design, energy efficiency, blight, seamless transportation, etc. etc. etc. Ugh. Oh but they really did hire a SUPERB Police Chief. Let's just hope he doesn't get discouraged and go away!"

All Departments

- *"City government is still very much fractured. The departments are not working together. There is no cohesiveness and so far neither the City Manager nor the Mayor has been able to accomplish this task. I am not aware of what is discussed in the Senior Staff meetings every Wednesday but it is not how to work together as a team. East Macdonald is a prime example of departments not working together. Redevelopment just blundered forward without getting any input from Parks and the landscaping, although looks nice now, is inappropriate for streetscape. Wrong irrigation, wrong trees planted in the wrong place, etc. And then this project is just handed over to Parks and told here it is now you take care of it".*

Public Works

- *"Worst dept. the unit responsible for filling in pot holes in our streets. Carlson blvd for one. I can tell exactly where ElCerrito ends and Richmond begins, by the number and depth of the potholes!"*

- *"The folks who do landscaping work for the city of Richmond are awful. They act like lumberjacks and just whack away. After they are done, there are ugly stumps and misshapen shrubs all over. There is no rhyme or reason to what they do or how they do it, unless it is to maximize the destruction and ugliness. Often the trees they chop down are healthy. In 2006, they planted a lot of saplings along Cutting Blvd. between Harbor Way and 23rd. I cheered that unusual action. They actually planted trees rather than chopping them down! I was afraid that the saplings would be killed through vandalism which did not happen. But today, nearly all of them are dead. I would not be at all surprised if they are dead because of neglect by the landscaping people or else planting the wrong variety for a gritty urban landscape. Are there worse departments in Richmond? Could be, but none are as obviously visible to me."*

Special Award for a Citizen

I am giving a special award to a citizen who is sort of a one-person vigilante blight abatement force. Here is his report for 2007:

"Last year I had a few goals: eliminate illegal developers' signs and catch and arrest at least one person dumping. Here's how the year turned out:

Signs:

Huge progress with signs in Richmond (if you haven't noticed). I collected perhaps 2,000 signs in Richmond this year before I finally got smart.

I set up an email account in Yahoo called "no-blight-in-Richmond." I emailed developers and cc'd Monahan and informed them of the RMC, potential fines and their general contribution to blight in Richmond.

Most immediately apologized and stopped posting signs. More importantly, I contacted some of the quasi-public event sites (Cow Palace, San Mateo Event Center, Fort Mason, etc) and chastised them for illegally posting signs in Richmond.

Most of these event centers were shocked because their contracts with the sign companies stipulated that all necessary permits would be obtained before signs were posted.

It appears that only a few sign companies put up signs advertising things like "Guitar Show – Cow Palace," "Antique Fair – Marin Civic Center," etc. The event centers apparently got on the sign companies, because I haven't seen a single event center sign go up in Richmond now for months.

There are a few developers that continue to post signs: Marina Bay and Bay Villas have ignored any of my efforts to stop posting signs. I sent Monahan detailed contact information, hoping a simple, stern phone call would end their illegal efforts, but I guess they're too busy to get on these few recalcitrant developers.

In any event, public works crews now routinely collect these signs every Monday, so I've tapered off on collecting these signs. Every now and then someone will litter the city with misc signs ("Credit Repaired," etc), but for the most part this year was a significant success in keeping one form of blight off of Richmond's telephone poles and roadsides.

Dumping:

I caught one person dumping this summer, but I called the police too quickly, and for once the police also arrived very quickly. As they hadn't driven away from the dumping scene, little could be done other than to tell them to clean up.

I did, however, insist on making a citizen's arrest for littering, as the people clearly threw thrash on the street. The officer said I couldn't make a citizen's arrest for an infraction. Thinking the law had changed, I accepted this at face value and went on my way. I later did some research and determined the cop was simply full of crap.

I emailed Lori Ritter, and she asked the on-site DA to confirm my research and issue a training bulletin, which they did. So, something good came from that encounter.

I did arrest a homeless lady a few weeks ago for dumping a mattress onto CalTrans property at Cutting and Harbor.

I also arrested a drunk for urinating on the bike racks in front of Nystrom Elementary school. It was a 45 minute wait for the police to arrive, but they did cite him. Unfortunately, the DA's office never received an arrest report.

I asked Chief Magnus to look into this. If "victimless" misdemeanors aren't even being forwarded to the DA, I told him there was no point in citizens quite literally risking their lives to make quality-of-life arrests. Chris was exasperated but promised to look into it. I suspect he's too busy to look into something so minor, but it would be interesting to see if the police and DA have agreed to not bother with certain low-level, victimless crimes. This indeed would be a huge disappointment. As I've said before, the "anything goes" mentality has steeped into Richmond's

bones, and until the enforcement agencies start taking this minor stuff seriously, crime will continue at its breakneck pace.

2008 Predictions from E-FORUM Readers

- *"It is not really a predictions it is a hope that departments will start working together in the New Year."*
- *"As I've mentioned before, I'd still like to see a muni code banning urinating in public, but the police appear to be very aware of the applicability of PC 370."*
- *"I'd like to see some real teeth put into the boarded building ordinance. People should not be allowed to let property sit vacant for 10 years".*
- *"It would be nice to see cigarette adverting brought under control. Again, this type of advertising seems to contribute to Richmond's third-world appearance".*

How did E-FORUM Readers 2007 Predictions turn out?

There were none

How Did We Do on My Wishes for 2007?

My wishes for 2007 seem to fit into three categories: cleaner, leaner or greener.

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. **Wish unfulfilled. Code enforcement still has a long way to go.**
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. **Wish unfulfilled. Police recruitment has not caught up with the need.**
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**. Wish fulfilled. The Office of neighborhood Safety is funded and staffed by a director. Additional staff should be in place soon.**
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. **Wish unfulfilled. Despite substantial expenditures this past year, there is no long term plan in place.**

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. **Wish unfulfilled. While both audits have been completed, implementation has not been.**
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. **Wish partially fulfilled. The low hanging fruit is picked, but the City Council didn't want to go after the hard to reach stuff.**

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 Quiet Zones at every grade crossing in Richmond, and we need to enforce our existing noise ordinance for violations such as boom box cars. **Wish partially fulfilled. Additional crossings were added as quiet zones, but much remains to be done. No remarkable progress on other noise enforcement.**
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. **Wish unfulfilled. Project is stalled out for lack of funding.**
9. Green building policy. Despite direction by the City Council, there was no progress in 2006. The pubic wants sustainable building practices that are becoming commonplace in other California cities , and we need to implement it in 2007. **Wish fulfilled. Substantial progress has been made, and more is on the way.**
10. Potties in parks. If we are going to provide parks for people, we have to provide functional restrooms. **Wish fulfilled.**
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 parks 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. **Wish partially fulfilled. The Maritime Center is funded. An RFP on the Rigger's Loft and other Shipyard 3 buildings will go out soon.**
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 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. **Wish fulfilled. Richmond became a Certified Local Government in 2007, and Mechanics Bank's rehabilitation of the Reading Room/Trainmaster Building was wildly successful.**
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. **Wish unfulfilled, but the process moves on.**

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. **Wish unfulfilled. Little progress on either front.**
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 Adachi property in 2007 so as to actually connect with the Ohlone Greenway at El Cerrito's Gateway Park. **Wish partially fulfilled. Phase 1 opened in 207. Phase 2 should be completed in 2008.**
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 includes performance of WW II-era music and a historical Home Front symposium. **Wish fulfilled.**
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. **Wish partially fulfilled. Other initiatives are moving along.**
18. Environmentally 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." **Wish partially fulfilled. Look at the Ford Plant!**

Tom Butt Wishes for 2008

1. I hope to see a dramatic reduction in homicides.
2. I hope to see Planning and Building Regulations fully implement the recommendations of the Zucker Systems Report, do plan checks in two weeks, provide a usable set of Design Review Guidelines, actually do code enforcement and hire an architect to staff Design Review applications. I hope that Maria Viramontes' war on Design Review will find a workable resolution.

3. I hope to see code enforcement become fully effective throughout the City and at least remove the broken window syndrome as a contributing cause of crime in Richmond.
4. I hope that the City of Richmond prevails in the struggle with Chevron for dollars with an outcome that includes a failure of Chevron's property tax appeal, an audit that finds Chevron underpaid its utility user tax for the last two years, a provision for Chevron to build the Bay Trail across I-580 as part of the long wharf lease and a set of conditional use permit conditions for the Energy and Hydrogen Renewal project that includes $300 million for environmental justice mitigations.

5. I hope to see construction start on rehabilitation of The Plunge, the Maritime Center and the historic buildings at Shipyard 3.
6. I hope to see the Richmond Greenway completed.
7. I hope to see a progressive and community oriented City Council majority come out of the 2008 elections.
8. I hope the petition drive for the manufacturing tax is successful and that it wins in the 2008 election.
9. I hope the Home Front Festival is bigger and better than the successful 2007 event.
10. I hope that a way is found to keep the North Richmond Shoreline as open space.
11. I hope the City can develop the capability to follow prevailing means and standards for evaluating the condition of its infrastructure, designing rehabilitation and maintenance projects, conducting public bids and providing appropriate management, oversight and inspection.
12. I hope the City can adopt a plan to improve the condition of its streets over the next ten years to a minimum PCI of 60.

Happy New Year!