

Turning Rust into Rosie

Using Local Public-Private Partnerships to Create an Urban National Park in Richmond, California

Project Summary

At the beginning of World War II, the small industrial town of Richmond, California, mushroomed from 23,000 to over 100,000 when it embraced, almost overnight, what soon became the largest shipyards in the world. When the yards closed in 1945, Henry



Kaiser had built 747 ships, including one constructed in a little over 3 days – a record that still stands. The shipyards' legacy includes the first (and still the largest) HMO (Kaiser Permanente) and breakthroughs in child care, women's rights and civil rights. It also left Richmond with a 50-year recession.

Because so much of the historical infrastructure was extant and because Richmond had already planned a memorial to Rosie the Riveter in 1999, the National Park Service chose Richmond as the best place in America to tell the WW II Home Front story – the Arsenal of Democracy that helped win the war and spawned the legend of Rosie the Riveter. This is the story of how a City leveraged its once maligned historic resources into a unique “partnership national park” that is now part of Richmond's revival.

Project Description

The City of Richmond, California

The City of Richmond, with a population of 103,000, is located 16 miles northeast of San Francisco, directly across San Francisco Bay, on a peninsula separating San Francisco Bay (on the south) and San Pablo Bay (to the north) with has 33.7 square miles of land area and 32 total miles of shoreline – more than any other city on San Francisco Bay

Although Richmond's largest employer remains the Chevron Refinery and Chevron Research Campus, its economy is currently undergoing a major transition from heavy industry toward more high technology and light industrial companies and new business parks accommodating light industrial and "office/flex" land uses. Biotechnology, in particular, has developed as an important new "niche" in Richmond's growing economy.

Today, Richmond is a growing maritime, industrial and residential community with a thriving and changing economy, a dynamic business environment, and strong potential for further growth.

Richmond is racially and ethnically diverse with 31% white, 36% African-American and 12% Asian. The Latino or Hispanic proportion is growing at 27%. Richmond continues to suffer high unemployment in its older core neighborhoods, and the City has been particularly plagued with gun violence. In 2004, it had the highest homicide rate for a city in California.

How Richmond Got its National Park

The Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park (Park) was established by Congress in 2000 in the WW II boomtown of Richmond, California as the result of a unique confluence of local and national activities, partnerships, and historic resources that continue to shape this 21st Century Park and community. Richmond was determined as the best place to tell the World War II home front story because it



Above: Historic Shipyard 3 and the Red Oak Victory from Sheridan Point. Below: Band of “Rosies” entertains at the Memorial



contained the largest intact collection of historic sites and structures to tell the stories associated of how “total war”-- industry, government, and citizen efforts -- led to victory in World War II.

Prior to the establishment of the Park, a citizens committee formed by the City launched a campaign to memorialize home front women workers with the Rosie the Riveter Memorial on land once part of the Kaiser shipyards. This nationally executed event brought together “Rosies” from around the country, and from this modest beginning, a unique and creative “partnership park” was created in which

all of the land and historic structures are owned by numerous entities other than the National Park Service, including predominantly the City but also Contra Costa County, the Richmond Museum Association, a religious organization and a cooperative housing corporation. The Park can serve an example that can influence others to build a national historical park essentially with local resources.



The City of Richmond spent \$500,000 constructing the Rosie the Riveter Memorial. Designed by visual artist Susan Schwartzberg and landscape architect/environmental sculptor Cheryl Barton, the memorial was the first in the nation to honor and interpret this important chapter of American history.

The impact of the Park on the community has been extraordinary. Richmond suffered a 50-year recession after shipyards employing over 100,000 closed abruptly in 1945. What should have been a

source of pride for this ethnically diverse community became a bad dream. Those without vision called for the razing of shipyard-related historical structures in the name of economic development. The Park, however, has rekindled this pride in Richmond's past and taught new generations across the U.S. about the achievements of their parents and grandparents. Cultural tourism has now become a part of Richmond's economic development strategy.

Without waiting for federal funding to work its way through a multi-year pipeline, the partners, in cooperation with the National Park Service, have surged ahead to save artifacts and oral histories, document, preserve and rehabilitate buildings, restore a ship, educate the public (1.2 billion accesses to website www.rosietheriveter.org), secure grants, nominate sites to the National, State and local Registers and provide interpretive exhibits.

An act of Congress bound some of the partners almost inextricably into a program that demonstrates an exemplary Federal role and a sustained Federal/non-Federal partnership, but even better, the partners continue to be an example of thriving and successful cooperation.

It Started with a Vision

It all started with a vision by City Council member Donna Powers for a memorial to honor the women ("Rosie the Riveters") who worked in the Richmond Shipyards during WW II.



The Rosie the Riveter Memorial: Honoring American Women's Labor During WWII is the first in the nation to celebrate and interpret women's contributions to the Home Front. Sited at the location of the former Kaiser Shipyards, the memorial was constructed during Summer 2000 in Rosie the Riveter Memorial Park in Richmond's Marina Bay neighborhood. A dedication ceremony was held on October 14th, 2000.

In 1996, Donna Powers formed the Rosie the Riveter Committee, obtained funding commitments from the Richmond set aside from public works projects for public art (“% for the arts”) and worked with the Arts and Culture Commission to select an artist.

The Memorial design was the result of a regional competition was sponsored by the City of Richmond in late 1997 to select an artist to create the memorial. Competition announcements were sent to over 3,000 artists and arts organization in Washington, Oregon and California. Seventy-four West Coast artists and artist teams submitted qualifications for the Rosie the Riveter Memorial: Honoring American Women's Labor During WWII.

The finalists' proposals, which included detailed drawings of their design and a preliminary budget, were due on April 24th, 1998. A public exhibition of the finalists proposals was held in Richmond City Hall in April 1998. The public was invited to review the proposals and share their comments, which were forwarded to the Selection Panel. The Selection Panel reconvened to select the proposal that best met the Memorial goals, including the needs of the community and site and unanimously recommended the design by Susan Schwartzenberg and Cheryl Barton.

National Park Service Proposes Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front Park in Richmond

As the memorial design team was being selected in the spring of 1998, Councilwoman Donna Powers asked for Congressman George Miller's help in gaining “National Park Service Affiliated Site” status for the Rosie the Riveter Memorial. She believed that the resulting roadside markers might bring more attention and visitors to the monument to learn about women's experience during WWII.



The S.S. *Red Oak Victory*, built in Richmond and now owned by the [Richmond Museum Association](#) is being restored for full operation with funding from a \$1 million TEA grant. The City of Richmond provides the berth with a rental value of \$100,000 annually.

In 1998, Congressman Miller carried an “affiliated site” study authorization bill that become P.L.105-355 Sec. 505, “Rosie the Riveter National Park Service Affiliated Site,” which directed the National Park Service to complete a feasibility study within six months to determine whether: (A) Rosie the Riveter Park located in Richmond, California, is suitable for designation as a National Park Service affiliated site., and (B) the Rosie the Riveter Memorial Committee established by the City of Richmond, California, is eligible for National Park Service technical assistance for interpretive functions related to the park, including the preservation of oral histories from former workers at the

Richmond Kaiser Shipyards.

At the conclusion of the study in 2000, what the National Park Service found was beyond anyone's wildest imagination. The National Park Service Study Team found that the collection of historic structures and sites in Richmond was nationally significant. The study team further found that the Rosie the Riveter Memorial Park is most appropriate for inclusion and interpretation as a part of the larger historic district. It cannot stand alone as an affiliated area, and it merits consideration as a national historical park.

The study concluded with the following recommendation:

The National Park Service recommends Alternative III, to authorize the establishment of Rosie the Riveter / World War II Home Front National Historical Park, and a study of the feasibility and methodology of how additional sites could be included in or linked to the National Historical Park to adequately interpret the breadth and complexity of America's World War II Home Front experience.



The City of Richmond and Orton Development invested nearly \$50 million in rehabilitation of the former Ford Assembly Plant, after it was almost destroyed in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. The building, designed by Albert Kahn and listed in the National Register, served as a tank depot in World War II and will be the visitor center for Park. Above: final glazing and cleaning of windows. Below: Interior of craneway where Rosie the riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park visitor center will be located.



Over the next year, the National Park Service worked with City staff and representatives to develop a proposal for a National Historical Park that will become the premier site for interpreting Home Front America, a chapter of the WWII-experience that the Park Service had not yet been adequately told at any of its other locations. Along with the Rosie the Riveter Memorial, the National Historical Park would include additional historic interpretation along the waterfront and remaining war-time structures such as Kaiser Yard #3, the original Kaiser Field Hospital, workers' housing and two still-operating daycare centers that served workers' children during the war. The craneway of the historic Ford Assembly Building will house the Park's centerpiece - a Home Front Visitor and Education Center using artifacts, exhibitions and new technologies to interpret the contributions of everyday Americans here and across the nation during WWII.

Legislation authorizing the "Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park" was submitted by Congressman Miller and by Senators Boxer and Feinstein in March of 2000 was

signed into law by President Clinton in October 2000.

At almost the same time the national park legislation was signed, the Rosie the Riveter Memorial was dedicated on October 14th, 2000. Over 200 people including over 200 "Rosies" attended the dedication ceremony.

Sited at the former Kaiser Shipyard No. 2, the memorial evokes the act of constructing the ships with mass-assembly techniques adopted by Kaiser to make ships in Richmond more quickly, and the process of reconstructing memories of women who worked on the home front.



Rosie the Riveter Trust (RTRT) and dozens of other partners, in cooperation with the National Park Service saved the last shipyard Whirley crane located in Richmond and relocated it from a privately owned shipyard where the *Red Oak Victory* was built, to historic Shipyard 3, the current location of the *Red Oak Victory* and other historical structures.

Designed by visual artist Susan Schwartzberg and landscape architect/environmental sculptor Cheryl Barton, the Rosie the Riveter Memorial: Honoring American Women's Labor During WWII is the first in the nation to honor and interpret this important chapter of American history.

An estimated 18 million women worked in WWII defense industries and support services including steel mills, foundries, lumber mills, aircraft factories, offices, hospitals and daycare centers.

Project objectives

Although the original project objective, construction of the Rosie the Riveter Memorial, was unique but modest, the

current objective is to grow the Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park into a venue that will help change the image of Richmond, attract hundreds of



The Port Department of the City of Richmond leased former shipyard 3 to Auto Warehousing Company, and as a part of the site improvements, repainted the exterior of the former Plate Shop, one of several historic structures that is a part of Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Park. This is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a California Historic Landmark

thousands of national and international visitors to Richmond’s waterfront and historic sites and boost economic activity.

It became clear early in the feasibility study process that this was to be a unique “partnership” park. The National Park Service owns no land or buildings within the park. The City of Richmond is the park’s largest landowner. Two sites are owned by Contra Costa County, and the remaining sites are owned by a mutual housing cooperative, a religious organization and a real estate developer.

Obtaining federal funding for new national parks is a long process that can take decades. In order to get Rosie the Riveter up and running required a unique collaboration of the City of Richmond and the National Park Service as well as dozens of private sector and non-profit partners.



The City and the NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, with \$225,000 funding from the California Coastal Conservancy and the Association of Bay Area Governments, commissioned and installed the first of many sculptural trail markers on the Bay Trail at former Shipyard 2 that serve as interpretive exhibits. Another \$25,000 grant from the DAR will expand this project.

Partners

The list of Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park partners grows daily, and a list of the most important includes:

- National Park Service (Federal Agency)
- City of Richmond, California (including Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency and Port of Richmond)
- Richmond Visitors and Convention Bureau
- Contra Costa County
- Rosie the Riveter Trust
- Atchison Village Mutual Housing Cooperative
- Richmond Museum Association (owner of the S.S. *Red Oak Victory*)
- Kaiser Permanente
- Orton Development (owner of the Ford Assembly Plant)
- Ford Motor Company
- National Parks Foundation

- Pacific Gas & Electric
- California Coastal Conservancy
- Association of Bay Area Governments (sponsors of the Bay Trail Project)
- Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley
- DAR
- Auto Warehousing Company

There are hundreds of individuals and businesses that have provided grants and services as well.

Some projects are described throughout this submittal with photos. Others include:

- The City of Richmond, at a cost of some \$10 million, funded, constructed and maintains the Lucretia Edwards Park, the Barbara and Jay Vincent Park and Shimada Park along the Bay Trail at former Shipyard 2, all of which include interpretive historical exhibits.



Dedication of the temporary Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park Visitor Center in the Richmond City Hall Lobby. The City of Richmond also provides offices for the park staff in City Hall, allowing the recruitment of interns and volunteers.

- Rosie the Riveter Trust commissioned and funded the successful National Register nomination for Atchison Village, a 450-unit defense worker housing project. Now a mutual housing cooperative, the neighborhood retains much of its WWII-era appearance.
- The National Park Service has spent over \$700,000 for theme studies, interpretive scripts, building condition reports, histories, documentation and engineering studies for various historic sites within the park.
- The National Park Service spent \$45,000 for exhibits in the temporary City Hall Visitor Center.
- The California Coastal Conservancy provided an \$80,000 grant for 50 videotaped oral histories by the University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library.



Measuring Success

Success can be measured in many ways:

- Since 2000 when the Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park was established, over \$7 million in grants have been made by government and non-profit organizations for programs and improvements in Richmond related to the park.



- Since 2000, the National Park Service staff has increased from one person to over a dozen people, plus volunteers and interns, along with steadily increasing budget increases.
- The Rosie the Riveter Trust website (www.rosietheriveter.org) has received over 1.8 billion hits since 2000 and is averaging 140,000 per week, evidencing the nationwide interest in the park and the Home front.
- Visitor contacts by the National Park Service are estimated at over 20,000 people per year in 2006. The Richmond Visitor and Convention Bureau reports a 10% increase in lodging business in the last year.
- Through a grant from Ford through the National Parks Foundation that included \$1 million of media advertising, a program to contact former women home front workers (“Rosies”), over 10,000 contacts were made, and stories and artifacts were collected from 4,000. Over 10,000 individual items have been donated to the museum collection, including photographs, written stories, and curatorial objects
- Media features with national exposure related to Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park (and Richmond) average at least one per week.

Rosie the Riveter Trust won a \$2 million grant from the California Cultural and Historical Endowment toward rehabilitation of the Maritime Child Development Center, part of the Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park and the first government financed child development center in the United States. This is part of a larger project involving a \$22 million modernization/replacement of an adjacent elementary school and a \$2.5 million rehabilitation of a City park and community center.

Future Plans

The Park’s General Master Plan (GMP) is scheduled to be completed in 2006, and it will be coordinated with the City’s General Plan Update. The GMP is the basis for future federal funding legislation and will open the door to millions of dollars for the new Visitor Center and program operations. The various partners will continue to identify and assist in the implementation of projects and program needed for the park to reach its full potential.

“In order to preserve for the benefit and inspiration of the people of the United States ... there is established the Rosie the Riveter/World war II Home Front National Historical Park.”

Act of Congress signed by President Clinton,
October 24, 2000