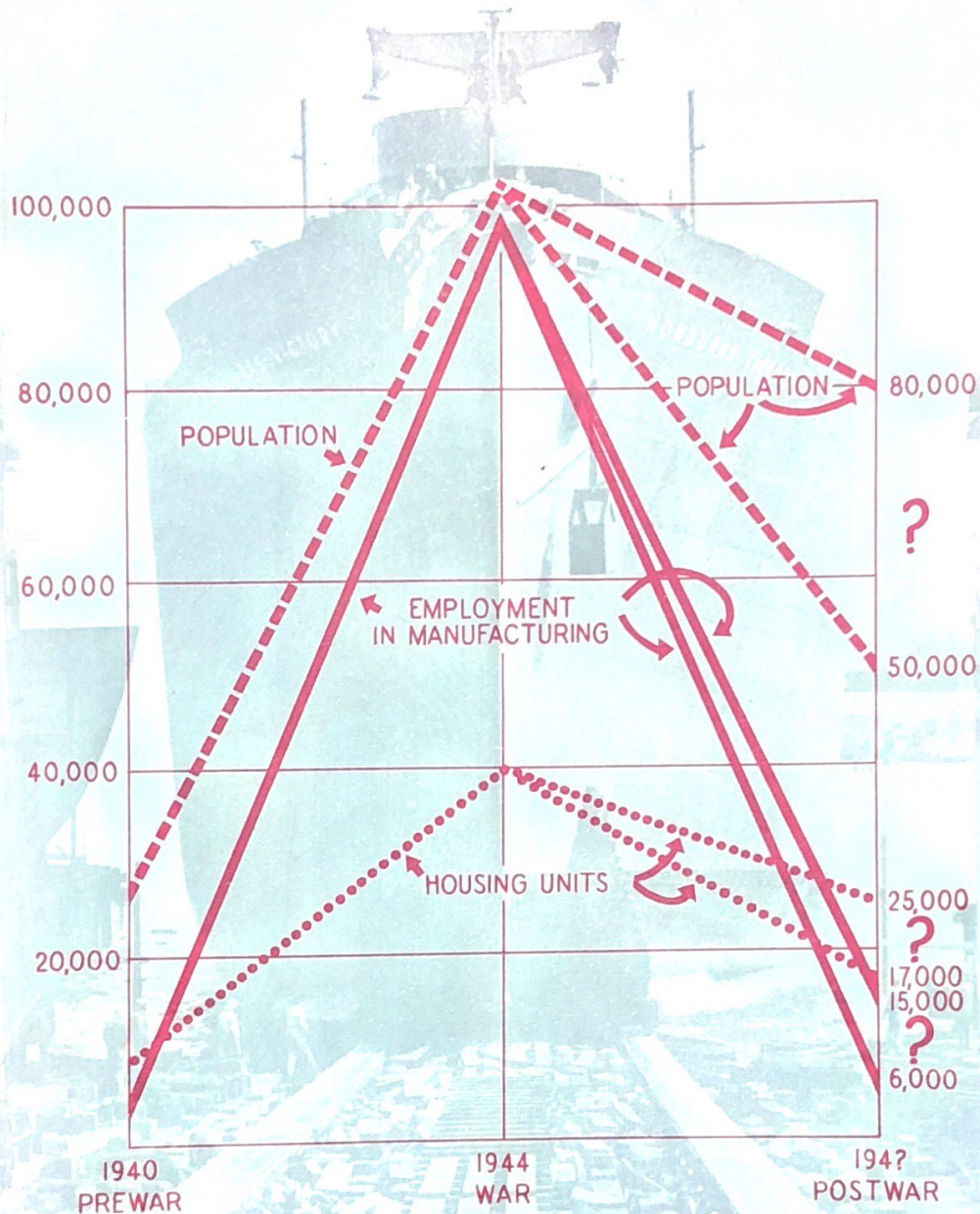


AN AVALANCHE HITS RICHMOND



A Report
by
The City Manager
City of Richmond, California

July 1944

CITY OF RICHMOND

California

August 15, 1944

Colonel Alexander R. Heron, Director
State Reconstruction and
Reemployment Commission
631 J Street
Sacramento, California

Dear Colonel Heron:

I am submitting herewith a report entitled An Avalanche Hits Richmond.

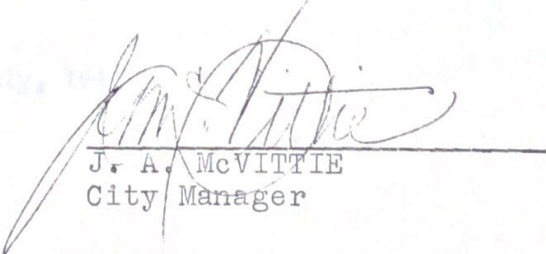
In a statement made on January 28th to the Congressional Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, of which Congressman Fritz G. Lanham was Chairman, Governor Warren said:

"Certain communities in California and elsewhere which must serve a suddenly increased permanent population, diverted to such areas as part of the war program, cannot provide adequate public facilities and services during the years immediately following the war from their own resources alone. It, therefore, seems as logical to consider a part of the cost of such facilities as a national responsibility, as is the acknowledged responsibility for rehabilitation of injured Veterans."

An Avalanche Hits Richmond is an attempt to show the effects of the war's impact upon one such war-expanded city, to itemize the public improvements needed to enable the city to furnish adequate municipal service to its postwar citizens, and to indicate the responsibility of the Federal Government to the city in financing such improvements.

We appreciate the interest your Commission has shown in the problems of our city, and we know that we can count on your continuing cooperation in the solution of these problems.

Very truly yours,



J. A. McVITTIE
City Manager

AN AVALANCHE HITS RICHMOND

A study of the impact of war production
upon The City of Richmond, California, and an
outline of measures necessary to provide the
facilities for normal postwar community service.

A Report
by
J. A. McVittie, City Manager
City of Richmond, California

July, 1944

AN AVALANCHE HITS RICHMOND

An Introduction

by

Mayor Robert D. Lee
City of Richmond

In 1940 progress was normal in the City of Richmond, population 23,000. In 1941, the first avalanche of shipyard construction struck the city. By 1942, disruption in municipal affairs became commonplace. The city, however, struggled on under its new army of sweating construction workers, although all community facilities and services were sorely taxed.

But the real avalanche -- of Liberty ship and Victory ship construction, of nearly 100,000 shipyard workers in a city of less than 100,000 persons, -- was just gathering speed. By 1943, its full force crashed upon Richmond and overwhelmed it. No small city with its limited civic resources could withstand such a savage, roaring impact of urgently concentrated, highly specialized, all-out response to the Nation's critical war needs.

From 1940 to 1944 the population of Richmond shot up from 23,000 to over 100,000 -- an increase of over 300 percent. The number of houses and dwelling units mushroomed from 7,000 to nearly 40,000 -- an increase of over 400 percent. And the number of employed industrial workers in Richmond exploded from 4,000 to 100,000 -- an increase of 2,400 percent.

Now, indeed, Richmond was overwhelmed, buried, hopelessly unable to fight its way back to any semblance of self-sufficiency.

The Federal Government recognized some of its responsibilities and helped Richmond to a certain extent. It gave aid by throwing roofs over workers' heads, and eventually -- at long last -- by assisting in the provision of a bare minimum of certain community facilities; such as water mains, sewers, fire stations, recreation fields, and schools, and by supplying funds for the

maintenance and operation of some of these facilities in order that the disrupted city might resume certain minimum essential community services.

These events have dramatized Richmond as a problem city. Other war-stricken cities have had their problems too. But in many of these the impact had started earlier and had gained momentum gradually. Their additions to community facilities were begun while building materials were still available and their facilities were well on the way to completion before acute shortages -- first, of construction materials, and later both materials and labor -- caused restrictions to be placed upon their use in Richmond for virtually anything but "command" construction.

Some other cities, for example, succeeded in obtaining enough new schools to give and continue to give a full day's instruction to every child. In Richmond, however, the most urgent needs developed after drastic restrictions had already been imposed. Richmond could obtain only sufficient new schools to accommodate half its bulging elementary and junior high loads. By 1943 all of these children had had to be divided into two half-day shifts, -- one group attending school in the morning, the other attending in the afternoon. At the worst peak of school congestion some of these half-time groups had to be subdivided again, and were able to attend school for only a third -- or even a quarter of the normal school day.

How devastatingly these and other similar deprivations increased the impact of war upon community life and upon family life in Richmond is not a happy story. Only the barest outlines can be sketched here.

This study does not attempt to explore the economic base or the economic prospects of the City of Richmond but assumes that the City's population will not drop below 50,000 and outlines proposed public improvements, which are based upon the needs of a City with a population of not less than 50,000. This does

not mean that the city officials are pessimistic about the future of the City, but only that they are being conservative in their recommendations for public improvements. To the extent that the City's postwar population exceeds 50,000, the demands on the City for capital outlay for improvements will be even greater. Many civic leaders believe the city's postwar population will exceed 75,000.

The attitude of the officials of the City of Richmond may best be described as realistic and confident. They hope that industrialists will have the same courage and drive in the production for Peace that they have exhibited in production for War. They believe that while the industrial growth of the West and the development of heavy industry in the San Francisco Bay Area may receive some temporary set-back at the end of the war, such industrial development can surely be counted upon to continue; they note the presence of the Kaiser interests in Richmond and their favored position in acquiring facilities in Richmond; they see that the expansion of the Standard Oil Company's plant and the related General Chemical plant, although presently devoted to wartime production, are both pointed in the direction of peace-time production. They realize that to be able to grasp its opportunities, Richmond must be able to offer facilities and services to meet the demands of its postwar population. This can be done if the rehabilitation program proposed in this study is made a reality.

This cooperative study attempts to call attention to some of the consequences of thus swamping the City of Richmond under Federal war activities completely beyond its own control; to show how plans and preparations can be, and must be, made for its rehabilitation in the transition period from War to Peace; to point out the responsibility of the Federal government to assist Richmond in this rehabilitation program; and to indicate how, by foresight and by continued planning, Richmond can expedite its return to normal, self-sustaining civic and community life in the years ahead.

Highlights

1. From 1940 to 1944:

The population of Richmond increased from 23,000 to over 100,000;

The number of housing units increased from 7,000 to nearly 40,000;

The number of employed industrial workers increased from 4,000 to over 100,000.

2. In 1940, Richmond had no shipyards; by the end of 1942, it had four shipyards plus a prefabrication plant.

City of Richmond

3. Capital outlay of the City in 1943-44 was \$262,000 --over three times the 1939-40 total of \$80,000.
4. Current operating expenditures of the City for the fiscal year of 1943-44 were over \$1,500,000 --just a little more than double the \$730,000 expended for the year 1939-40.
5. During this same period the total assessed valuation increased from about \$33,000,000 to \$47,000,000 --only about 40 per cent.
6. Federal purchases of land have removed \$1,000,000 in assessed valuation from the tax rolls during the past four years.
7. From 1940-41 to 1943-44 the property tax rate increased from \$1.963 to \$2.205. In 1940-41, property taxes produced 79% of the City's current receipts. In 1943-44, the property tax supplied 47% of the total receipts; or, if Lanham Act Funds be excluded, only 59%.
8. Richmond is scraping the bottom of the revenue barrel. However, by using to the limit those miscellaneous sources of revenue which other cities are just now beginning to utilize, the City of Richmond is in sound financial condition.

9. It is estimated that the City can make available during the postwar period the following amounts for capital improvements:
Approximately \$300,000 per year if the 1943-44 tax rate of \$2.205 is used.
Approximately \$180,000 per year if the 1940-41 tax rate of \$1.963 is used.
10. The City of Richmond needs:
Critical improvement projects, which should be started as soon as materials and manpower can be obtained, and which amount to \$1,309,359.
Urgent improvement projects, which can wait until the war is over, and which amount to \$841,437.
Other Needed improvement projects, which are essential to provide adequate postwar facilities, and which amount to \$4,645,015.
11. If the City provided \$240,000 per year toward the cost of these projects (the average of the two amounts suggested in 9. above), it would take over five years to finance merely the Critical projects on a pay-as-you-go basis without outside help.
12. On the same basis, it would take over three more years to finance the Urgent projects, and another twenty years to provide for the Needed projects.
13. Richmond will need all of these projects (Critical, Urgent, and Needed) within the next five years.
14. The City of Richmond has outstanding bonded indebtedness of \$985,000. Ninety percent of this is for development of the deep water harbor, without which it would have been impossible to establish the shipyards in Richmond.
15. City officials believe the Federal Government has a definite responsibility to assist Richmond in financing this physical rehabilitation program.

Richmond Schools

16. The taxpayers and the property which support the city government also have the additional burden of school taxes.
17. Between 1940 and 1944 the number of elementary school children increased from less than 3,000 to more than 13,000; the junior high load from less than 1,800 to more than 5,400; and the senior high load from 1,600 to 2,400.
18. During that time the number of elementary classrooms increased by less than one-half; and the combined junior and senior high classrooms increased by only 5 per cent.
19. School tax rates for 1943-44 were at the legal maximum.
20. Compared with the assessed valuations of 1939-40, those for 1943-44 had increased only 43 per cent in the elementary school district, and only 52 per cent in the high school district.
21. From greater than average California ability to support public schools, Richmond had sunk to approximately half the average; and from a sound financial position in 1940 the school districts have been forced to a precarious hand-to-mouth existence.
22. Critical improvement projects, required now, would cost about \$356,000. Urgent projects, required immediately after the war, would cost approximately \$1,578,000. Needed projects to provide adequate facilities for normal peace-time schools in a city of 50,000 would cost an additional \$220,000.
23. It will be impossible for the two Richmond school districts to finance these improvements.
24. The Federal Government must fulfill its obligation to the children of the 100,000 new people it has brought to these districts.

PART II

RICHMOND: PREWAR, WAR AND POSTWAR

A Summary of the Case

	<u>Page</u>
It Happened in Richmond	9
Postwar Prospects	11
Richmond and The Bay Region	13
A Bill of Particulars	15
Footing the Bill	22
Next Steps	26

It Happened in Richmond

In 1940 a large portion of the area which the Richmond shipyards now occupy was tidelands and marshlands. Then, drawn by the almost unequalled combination of a deep water port and available space, the Federal government and the Kaiser interests chose Richmond as an ideal place in which to build the ships to win the war. On January 14, 1941, the construction of Shipyard No. 1 was started. On April 14, 1941, the first keel was laid. Four months later the first ship slid down the ways. Yards 2, 3 and 4, and the prefabrication plant all followed in quick succession, sprawling out over nearly 900 acres, much of it man-made. In less than three years over 500 ships have been launched from these yards, sometimes at the rate of over one per day. More than one-fifth of the Liberty ships required to meet the war's demands were built in Richmond.

To house the thousands of men and women who came with their families from all parts of the State and the Nation to man these mammoth ship-producing plants, the Federal government constructed 24,000 public housing units at a cost of nearly \$50,000,000. Six thousand additional homes were privately built. The population of Richmond quadrupled to over 100,000, with tens of thousands more just outside the city limits.

And all this came to Richmond, in 1940 a city of 23,000 population. It came to a city whose civic and commercial facilities had been provided for a population of 15,000 to 25,000. For example, the Richmond city hall was built in 1916 when the population was about 16,000; a public library was built in 1910 for a city of 15,000, and enlarged in 1923, when the population was 17,000.

The facilities of the community were completely overwhelmed by the huge influx of newcomers. Normally the growth of a city is gradual and the increased

population can be absorbed into the community and additional facilities can be provided as required. In this case, however, even the barest minimum requirements were slow in coming. 100,000 people were required, in some cases, to use the facilities provided for less than 25,000.

The Federal government built temporary war housing without providing concurrently the necessary schools, commercial facilities and recreational facilities, and without assuring adequate police and fire protection. Schools were doubled up on a two-shift basis, then to three shifts, and finally, in extreme cases, to four shifts of students utilizing the same rooms successively. This was literally a dark period for the schools. The first shift of elementary school children were going to school while the street lights were still burning, and the last shift remained in school until late in the evening.

Tens of thousands of all types of people, and from all parts of the United States, were thrown into Richmond where, because of the impossibility of obtaining adequate community services, even normal social controls could not be maintained. The result was congestion and utter confusion. Richmond was literally bursting at the seams. Each time a seam was repaired by bringing one facility up to bare minimum requirements, a break occurred elsewhere. The former self-sufficient city of Richmond could not hope to meet the demands of over 75,000 new people and 100,000 new workers.

The difficulty of providing even minimum wartime services during this period is well illustrated by the following:

The Federal Works Agency provided funds for the employment of seventy-five additional policemen during the period of June 1 to August 1, 1943. Because of high wages being paid in war industries, the city was successful in hiring only eight additional policemen.

At one time the City Fire Department had only four ladders over 24 feet long -- two 35 feet and two 50 feet in length. The 24 foot ladders carried with each fire truck would not reach the roofs of most of the two-story buildings in the city including thousands of the public housing units.

Postwar Prospects

This report does not attempt to forecast the future population of Richmond. For the purpose of determining the public improvements that will be needed by the city, it is assumed that the population will not drop below 50,000 in the readjustment period following the war. It should be made clear that this is not a prediction that it will fall to 50,000, but merely a basis for determining the minimum public improvements that will be needed even with this minimum population. To the extent that the population is larger the need for facilities and services will be correspondingly greater.

A major determinant of the size of postwar Richmond will be the volume of employment in the shipyards. For this reason, it is important that city officials know as soon as possible what this volume of employment may be expected to be. Before a new city hall can be planned, decisions must be made as to its size. A building suitable for a town of 50,000 population would be inadequate for a town of 75,000 or 100,000. This indicates the importance to the city of an early statement of Federal policy with respect to continuation or disposal of the shipyards.

Another important factor in determining the future of Richmond is the policy of the Federal government in removing the tens of thousands of temporary war housing units. The City cannot expect the resumption of private residential

building if these units are allowed to compete with, or to remain as a threat to private residential development.

If these public housing units are allowed to remain after the war need for them is passed, they will not only be a threat to future home building, but will undermine the values of existing private homes in Richmond. Therefore, it is imperative that the temporary war housing be removed at the earliest possible moment. Alternative programs for removal of this war housing are set up in Part III of this report.

It is important to point out that while the shipyards employ by far the largest part of the wartime workers in Richmond, there are many other important normal peacetime industries. A recent tabulation by the Richmond Chamber of Commerce shows eighty-two separate widely diversified manufacturing plants, other than the shipyards. Employment in these plants may be expected to continue after the war, although in some cases, at somewhat reduced rates. This report showed the 1943 employment in the plants employing more than 100 workers, to be:

Standard Oil Co. of California	3,258
Ford Motor Company	1,575
Filice and Perrelli Canning Co.	600
American Radiator & Standard Sanitary Corp. (Pacific Enamel Works)	595
California Steel Products Co.	500
Rheem Manufacturing Co.	460
Pullman Company	336
Chemurgic Corporation	320
California Spray-Chemical Corporation	272
American Radiator and Standard Sanitary Corp. (Pacific Pottery Works)	225
Certain-Teed Products Corporation	190
Enterprise Engine and Foundry Company	180
California Cap Company	160
Inland Steel-Container Company	110
Total	8,781

includes not only the City of Richmond, but also Al Corrie and the Richmond High School District includes not only the

Other factors favor sound development in Richmond after the war. The city has an excellent deep-water port and, when the Federally-owned property is returned to private ownership, there will be available splendid industrial sites served by deep water and by both the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific Railroads, as well as ample residential building areas. If these lands can be made available for private development, promptly and at favorable prices and terms the future of Richmond should be bright.

Richmond and the Bay Region

An important factor to be considered in connection with Richmond's future is interrelationship of the City of Richmond with the rest of the San Francisco Bay Region. For example, at the time that the peak of manufacturing employment in the City reached about 100,000, the total population of the City was still less than 100,000. That is, more people were working in manufacturing alone in the City than the total population. This meant, of course, that by far the greater part of those working in Richmond lived in surrounding localities -- some of them actually as far away as 40 or 50 miles. The fact that people can live in many other places in the Bay Area and work in Richmond, or conversely, can live in Richmond and work in other parts of the Bay Area, shows clearly that the population of Richmond will not necessarily be in direct proportion to the volume of manufacturing employment after the war.

This relationship to other parts of the Bay Area is evidenced in other ways. The City Government is, of course, confined to the City limits. But thousands who live outside Richmond utilize the commercial, recreational, educational and other community facilities within the City. The Richmond Elementary School District includes not only the City of Richmond, but also El Cerrito and the Kensington area. The Richmond High School District includes not only the

Richmond Elementary School District but also San Pablo, Pinole-Hercules and Sheldon Elementary School Districts.

In the problem of sewage disposal, Richmond has cooperated with other cities in the East Bay in their efforts to solve this problem by participating in the survey of sewage disposal for the East Bay Area.

No community can function satisfactorily or expect normal development without adequate local public transportation. This important service within Richmond is tied directly into both East Bay and trans-Bay transportation. Most of this transportation is furnished by the Key System, although other lines contribute to this service. In order to help move workers to and from the shipyards, the Shipyard Railway has been put into operation utilizing old discarded "L" cars from New York City and running from the shipyards through South Richmond, Berkeley and into Oakland. This war-emergency service has relieved some of the pressure on overloaded bus lines but cannot be expected to continue as a postwar service.

If there is to be a thriving postwar Richmond, there must be ample local public transportation not only within the City, but from it to other East Bay cities and across the Bay. Richmond cannot expect to keep pace with its neighbors if such service is not available to its citizens. With the cooperation of the State Railroad Commission, the Key System, and other interested agencies and groups, it should be possible to assure that Richmond will be provided with satisfactory service, as soon as the shortage of manpower and equipment is relieved.

A Bill of Particulars

A. By the City of Richmond

Table I lists municipal improvements needed for the rehabilitation of the physical facilities of the City of Richmond. Their estimated total cost is \$6,795,811. If these improvements are provided the City will have adequate facilities for a postwar population of 50,000. If they are not provided, Richmond will remain a "war-casualty city" impotent to meet the requirements of this population. If the population is more than the assumed 50,000, the needs will be even greater. The proposed projects represent actual needs and not "dream projects". Part IV of this report considers these projects individually and outlines the justification for them.

Estimates of cost on many of the projects are only preliminary. No estimates were available on some of the projects and these are not considered in the totals.

The needed projects are divided into three classes:⁽¹⁾

Class A - <u>Critical Projects</u>	-	amounting to	\$1,309,359
Class B - <u>Urgent Projects</u>	-	amounting to	841,437
Class C - <u>Other Needed Projects</u>	-	amounting to	<u>4,645,015</u>
Total			\$6,795,811

Figure 1, page 19, indicates the location of major projects.

(1) These three classes are defined as follows:

Class A: Critical projects which because of imperative needs, must be started as soon as materials and manpower are available;

Class B: Urgent projects which can wait until after the war is over but are necessary to provide reasonable service for a City of a minimum population of 50,000;

Class C: Other needed projects which must be provided to supply adequate facilities for a normal peacetime City of a minimum population of 50,000.

B. By the Richmond Schools

Table II lists school improvements needed to provide facilities for the postwar school population of the Richmond elementary and secondary school districts. Their estimated total cost is \$2,154,000. These, too, are divided into three groups as defined above:

Class A - <u>Critical Projects</u> -	amounting to	\$ 356,000
Class B - <u>Urgent Projects</u> -	amounting to	1,578,000
Class C - <u>Other Needed Projects</u>	amounting to	220,000

Part V, Section I of this report considers the impact on the Richmond Elementary and Secondary Schools when, from 1940 to 1944:

Elementary enrollment increased from	2,987	to	13,112
Junior high enrollment increased from	1,778	to	5,447
Senior high enrollment increased from	1,652	to	2,474

and when, during the same period, average enrollment per classroom increased:

In the elementary schools from	23	to	67
In the junior high schools from	24	to	75
In the senior high schools from	27	to	39

It also discusses, project by project, the improvements that are required to provide needed school facilities both now and in the postwar adjustment period, and considers the financial plight of the districts because of this deluge of children from all parts of the Nation.

The Federal Government is financing construction of some additional school rooms but not enough to meet even minimum normal requirements. Several of the proposed improvements are needed desperately now. Some of the results of not having them are pointed out in Part V, Section II, Youth Services and Juvenile Delinquency.

El Cerrito Jr.-Sr. High Civic and
School Auditorium

Subtotal

GRAND TOTAL of Classes A, B, & C

GRAND TOTAL of Classes A, B, & C