For Immediate Release
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Richmond Mayor Tom Butt Celebrates Accomplishments and Lays Out Vision for 2016 in His Second State of the City Address

What: Richmond Mayor Tom Butt delivers his second State of the City address to announce key policy priorities for 2016.
Who: Richmond Mayor Tom Butt; Richmond City Council; Richmond City Manager Bill Lindsay
When: Tuesday, January 26, 2016
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Where: Richmond City Council Chambers
440 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804

Richmond, Calif. – In his second annual State of the City address today, Richmond Mayor Tom Butt will celebrate the city’s accomplishments over the past year and describe challenges facing the city for 2016, including stabilizing the city’s budget, lowering the crime rate and increasing the availability of affordable housing.

“Richmond made incredible progress in 2015. Our unemployment rate reached historic lows, we upgraded several parks and community centers, we launched a social impact bond program to fix blighted properties, and we created the Richmond Promise to enhance our city’s college-going culture,” said Mayor Butt. “There are a few serious and urgent challenges that we need to take head-on; chief among them are reducing crime and working towards a sustainable budget for 2016-17.”

Mayor Butt’s key accomplishments in 2015 included hosting Business Roundtables to attract and retain local jobs, re-launching the Mayor’s Community Fund to support youth sports, initiating a branding and marketing campaign to improve Richmond’s image, and leading an effort to defeat the expansion of the West County Detention Facility. Additionally, Mayor Butt represented Richmond at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, where he shared Richmond’s efforts to combat climate change with an international audience.

Mayor Butt also secured assistance from the White House’s Strong Cities, Strong Communities initiative last year to develop a five-year budget forecast for the city. This tool is instrumental as the mayor works to find $8.7 million through a combination of expense reductions and new revenues for the next fiscal year.

“One of my top priorities for 2016 will be ensuring Richmond’s budget is sustainable – both in the short-term and the long-term,” Mayor Butt said. “I have asked the City Council to spend time each month to
address ways for cutting expenses and finding new revenues in preparation for the new budget. We know that we must institute serious changes for the long-term financial security of the city.”

Mayor Butt also commented on the recent increase in crime in 2015:

“We don’t know if this is an anomaly or a new trend. In the past, our successful efforts for reducing crime were multi-faceted, involving everything from skilled police officers building relationships with the community, to continued contact with at-risk youth by our nationally recognized Office of Neighborhood Safety. Efforts have especially benefited from continued support from various community partners that participate in initiatives like Ceasefire and events like National Night Out. This may be enough, but we may have to get even more creative.”

The mayor has set a goal to reduce overall crime and bring homicides to single digits by 2017, which would be the city’s lowest homicide count in more than 34 years.

Increasing the quantity of affordable and market rate housing in Richmond was another theme Mayor Butt discussed on Tuesday. In his remarks, the mayor vowed to continue his support for the city’s social impact bond program, which rehabilitates vacant foreclosed properties and sells them to low-income homebuyers. Mayor Butt also expressed interest in selling city-owned properties to residential affordable housing developers and securing funding from state and local sources for affordable housing construction.

“Richmond continues to offer some of the lowest rents in the Bay Area, and the lowest rents of any city located along the BART line. Given that strategies like rent control have not worked in neighboring cities, I am committed to ensuring that our current residents are able to fully participate in Richmond’s growth and successes, while creating opportunities to welcome new members to our community, by working to increase the number of residential units in Richmond.”

Mayor Butt praised Richmond City Manager Bill Lindsay and senior staff for many departmental accomplishments that occurred in 2015, including completing of the Bradley Moody Underpass, opening of the Richmond Swim Center at Kennedy High School, relocating tenants from the Hacienda Housing Complex, closing gaps in the Bay Trail, and launching new car-share programs for Richmond residents.

Mayor Butt recognized Betty Reid Soskin, the oldest serving Park Ranger in the National Park Service, as Richmond’s Person of the Year 2015. He also announced new staffing changes in the Mayor’s Office. David Gray is the new Chief of Staff, Alex Knox is Director of Policy and Strategy, Christopher Whitmore is Director of Community Engagement, and Irene Perdomo is Director of Projects and Programs.

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