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Richmond

THE PAST INFORMS THE FUTURE

Ernst Valery is pursuing Richmond development with a focus on inclusion and equitability. His development partnership, SAA|EVI, is behind some of the most progressive housing and mixed-use projects in the country.



Wendell Pierce – a Richmond advocate

Economic development is a social justice movement, says the film and TV star. **5**



Betty Reid Soskin

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A prime location for creative entrepreneurs

Abundance of affordable industrial space nurtures manufacturing enterprises

Ever since World War II, when an industrial boom led to a population increase from 23,600 in 1940 to over 93,700 by 1943, Richmond has grown with the help of its creative companies.

Today, companies like ingredient manufacturer Lemur International Inc. are carrying that torch into Richmond's future. Lemur imports vanilla beans, organic essential oils, and spices from Madagascar. Those ingredients then go into products such as vanilla powder, protein shakes and baking goods.

Owner Bodo Carol Rakotomalala says that Richmond was an obvious choice for their operation. "We moved to Richmond in 2005 for cost-effective rent and its prime location," she says.

But these weren't the only factors that helped the company thrive. Lemur was able to grow with the help of a small business loan from the city, a process which Rakotomalala describes as "seamless. The loan helped us to get ahead with our supply chain management and allowed us to be able to fulfill our clients' orders on time," she says.

Lemur is demonstrative of the diverse Richmond manufacturing tapestry, helping to bring the Bay Area's reputation for excellent food to life with well-sourced, unique ingredients. Those ingredients travel around to the thousands of restaurants hungry to put fresh experiences in front of their customers.

Galaxy Desserts, a major supplier of gourmet baked goods to local grocery and specialty stores, also operates in Richmond. Jean-Yves Charon, the pastry chef who co-founded the bakery in 1998, enjoys being in Richmond in part for the unique natural pleasures the city offers. "Our factory is right on the water, and it has a great view of San Francisco," he says.

Richmond's vast industrial spaces make it an ideal home for a growing business, Charon adds. Indeed, the city remains a hidden gem for companies looking to expand, but put off by the spiraling costs for industrial space that dominate most of the Bay Area.



"Our factory is right on the water, and it has a great view of San Francisco."

Jean-Yves Charon
Founder and chef,
Galaxy Desserts



Richmond's creative spirit also makes the city a good testing ground for entrepreneurs with a social orientation. Take Pogo Park, a nonprofit that is turning the design and manufacturing world on its head with its mission to create a community-based park construction firm. The Richmond-based organization is working to create new models for revitalizing community parks because, as executive director Toody

Lemur International's display at the 2017 Taste of Richmond festival in Point Richmond. Owner Bodo Carol Rakotomalala (at left) moved the company to Richmond in 2005.



Top and above: A park in Richmond was a community collaboration through Pogo Park, a non-profit, community-based park design and construction firm.



“People need to be able to create things.”

Toody Maher
Executive Director,
Pogo Park

Maher explains, traditional models don't serve the communities they're meant to.

“What happens now is the money goes to all these professional experts from outside, and it never touches the people who live near the parks,” Maher says. For example, “there might be two or three community meetings that eight people show up to and that's it.”

Maher has been determined to forge a different path for community-involved design and development. Pogo Park has opted for community design and manufacturing, with help from downtown Richmond design and fabrication specialists at Scientific Art Studio.

Local residents are also given paid positions for their help with design and manufacturing. This is critical, according to Maher, because their funding stays local when they use local employees.

In keeping with that localist philosophy, Pogo Park offers classes for everything from welding to 3D-printing, giving residents a chance to build the park that their community needs. “People need to be able to create things,” Maher says. “They need to be able to build.”

Made in Richmond

A snapshot of advanced manufacturing companies in Richmond

Nutiva

Founded: 1999

Employees: 96

A superfood company whose products include hemp seed bars and a line of hemp and coconut oils. Supporting regenerative farming and zero waste, Nutiva proves that businesses can benefit the world.

Lemur International

Founded: 1996

Employees: 7

Lemur International imports vanilla beans and essential oils and spices from Madagascar. It also creates vanilla powder, protein shakes and baked goods that consumers see all around the Bay Area.

Galaxy Desserts

Founded: 1998

Employees: 200

A major supplier of gourmet baked goods which can be found in grocery and specialty stores throughout the region.

Analytical Scientific Instruments (ASI)

Founded: 1988

Employees: 18

ASI helps scientific firms diagnose their mechanical difficulties and provides them with high-quality components that allow them to bring projects to market quickly.

SMASHsolar

Founded: 2012

Employees: 10

SMASHsolar provides the first module-integrated mounting for G2G solar modules, allowing for much faster installation without additional components.

Ekso Bionics

Founded: 2005

Employees: 89

Makes exoskeletons for people who need help working or healing. They're developing products to assist with rehabilitation from spinal damage and strokes, and also improving efficiency for the construction and manufacturing fields.

Heliodyne

Founded: 1976

Employees: 6

Heliodyne has been in Richmond since 1976, one of the pioneers of solar hot water in the country. They supply homes across the U.S and combine value with experience to give the Bay Area another way to help the environment – and their wallets.