

2013 GOVERNOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

Ford Assembly Building



Exterior of the Craneway Pavilion in the restored Ford Assembly Building, Richmond

The ambitious restoration of the Ford Assembly Building in Richmond, California, rejuvenated the primary building of Henry Ford's largest automotive production plant west of the Mississippi. The Assembly Building, designed by architect Albert Kahn, was built in 1931.

During World War II, the facility switched from automobiles to producing military vehicles assembled by women workers known as "Rosie the Riveters." Approximately 49,000 jeeps and 91,000 other military vehicles were processed at the Richmond site by these women whose desire to serve aided the country throughout the war. After the war, the Assembly Building returned to its intended purpose of automobile production. In 1989, the building was abandoned after sustaining major damage from the Loma Prieta Earthquake.

Orton Development acquired the property in 2004, and working with the City of Richmond, transformed the abandoned building into a vibrant center for business and civic activities. The historic character of the building was retained and enhanced, as was the building's relationship to the waterfront.

Twenty-first century features such as free-standing buildings within the building, hanging stairways, and central meeting rooms, were designed to benefit from and highlight the building's defining architectural features including the 35-foot high windows running the full perimeter of the craneway, the sawtooth roof, and the overall fabric of brick, concrete, and steel. Roll-up and accordion-style glass

doors blur the line between inside and outside, creating an even stronger sense of connection to the waterfront.

Today, the Ford Assembly Building is home to businesses, restaurants, the Rosie the Riveter Visitor Center (located in the building's restored oil house), and the Craneway Pavilion with its light-filled space for the performing arts and other civic events. This former auto plant now stands as a treasured source of civic pride.

Learn more about the history of the Ford Assembly Plant, the restoration project, and the current life of the site: <http://www.craneway.com/>