

# RICHMOND REGION 2030

*A Strategic Direction for the  
Richmond Region's Visitor Economy*



RICHMOND  
REGION  
TOURISM

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# INTRODUCTION

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# INTRODUCTION

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*The Richmond Region is a dynamic collaboration between the five counties of Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent and Powhatan, the city of Richmond and the town of Ashland. In 2018, the region welcomed more than 7.7 million overnight visitors, generating \$2.6 billion for the local economy and supporting industries ranging from accommodations and transportation to food & beverage, retail, culture and sports and recreation. On many levels, Richmond Region Tourism's mission—to “grow the economy of the Richmond Region by attracting conventions, meetings, and visitors and ensure that all have a great experience”—has been successful.*

But the role of destination marketers is undergoing profound changes, and Richmond Region Tourism must now be responsible for much more than simply attracting greater numbers of visitors. We need to be thoughtful about how the quality of the visitor experience can be balanced with the quality of life for residents; about the kinds of visitors who would most appreciate the region's character, its people and its offering; and how we can responsibly grow our tourism industry for the benefit of all in our community. That's why, in late 2018, we embarked on a journey to create our first Tourism Master Plan.

Tourism Master Planning is about taking a strategic, rather than organic, approach to defining an overarching vision and competitive positioning for a region as a destination. In a world where the competition for visitors and investment is fierce, identifying specific visitor segments and focusing on providing high-value travel experiences can help the Richmond Region differentiate itself and become a destination with a future that we as a community desire.

By 2030, the Richmond Region is expected to welcome more than 9 million visitors. As we plan and prepare for this future, we must be fully aware of the transformative power generated by tourism. Tourism enhances the

perception of the Richmond Region, which is critical to regional prosperity. Increasingly, reputation, identity and the perceived quality of place determine where talent, capital and investment flow. In this respect, tourism is the front door to economic development. At the same time, the vibrancy and variety of restaurants, retail, museums, cultural institutions and other experiences available in the Richmond Region are a result of the patronage of visitors as well as locals. Without tourism, we wouldn't be able to enjoy the quality of life we experience in the region today.

This is the reason we appeal to our community to support and advocate for the Richmond Region visitor economy. Achieving this vision is not a linear process and by no means a quick win. This Tourism Master Plan is the beginning of a dialogue. So far, there has been tremendous support for this plan, as well as enthusiasm to collaborate on its realization.

We hope you will join us as we work to build a more livable, lovable and prosperous region.



**Jack Berry**  
President & CEO  
Richmond Region Tourism



# IN THIS TOGETHER

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# IN THIS TOGETHER

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Richmond Region Tourism has brought together industry leaders from across the public and private sector to provide guidance and input into the development of this Tourism Master Plan.

As representatives of, and advocates for the Richmond Region's visitor economy, we recognize the importance of this moment in time. This is a unique opportunity to influence the role the visitor economy can have on this region in the years to come.

Richmond Region 2030 sets a direction we believe in and are committed to implementing. We are proud to present the Tourism Master Plan and we look forward to supporting Richmond Region Tourism to make the plan's shared vision a reality.



**Dr. Joseph P. Casey**  
County Administrator  
Chesterfield County



**Cecil R. Harris, Jr.**  
County Administrator  
Hanover County



**John A. Vithoulkas**  
County Manager  
Henrico County



**Lenora Reid**  
Acting Chief  
Administrative Officer  
City of Richmond



**Rodney A. Hathaway**  
County Administrator  
New Kent County



**Theodore L. Voorhees**  
County Administrator  
Powhatan County



**Joshua S. Farrar**  
Town Manager  
Town of Ashland



# THE IMPACT OF TOURISM



# THE IMPACT OF TOURISM

## Tourism Stimulates Our Economy

Destination promotion is an engine of economic development in the Richmond Region.

**7.7 MILLION VISITORS IN 2018**



WHO SPENT **\$2.6 BILLION** *OR* **\$7 MILLION PER DAY**

**24,483 JOBS SUPPORTED**

WITH WAGES  
& SALARIES  
TOTALING  
**\$592 MILLION**



**\$73 MILLION**  
IN LOCAL TAXES  
COLLECTED



**9.2 MILLION**  
VISITORS EXPECTED  
BY 2030

## Tourism Fosters Community Pride

More than ever, our citizens are proud to live in the Richmond Region

**95% OF RESIDENTS**  
*FEEL PROUD*  
THAT THE RICHMOND  
REGION IS AN ATTRACTIVE  
TOURIST DESTINATION

**95% OF RESIDENTS  
BELIEVE TOURISM  
IS GOOD FOR THE  
RICHMOND REGION**

**82% OF RESIDENTS  
BELIEVE THE  
RICHMOND REGION IS A  
DESTINATION VISITORS  
WANT TO VISIT**



# CRAFTING A TOURISM MASTER PLAN

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# CRAFTING A TOURISM MASTER PLAN

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A Tourism Master Plan serves a range of purposes: it creates a consensus between the stakeholders who participate in decision making on tourism-related development for the region; it helps investors and businesses understand where they could be putting their energies as the vision for tourism is realized; and it helps all audiences understand and close the gap between what visitors and residents wish to experience (the “demand side” of the equation) and stakeholders who create and offer them activities and experiences (the “supply side”).

Richmond Region Tourism engaged Resonance, a leading advisor in tourism, real estate and economic development, as a partner to develop a 10-year Tourism Master Plan for the region. Resonance was chosen in large part for the breadth of its experience, as well as its commitment to fostering community, preserving cultural heritage, protecting the environment and generating economic benefits for all those involved.

*Resonance’s approach to the creation of a Tourism Master Plan was designed to help residents and stakeholders articulate and share a clear vision for the future—because when people share a vision of the future, it gives them a shared belief, a shared purpose and a shared passion.*

The process undertaken to develop the Tourism Master Plan was divided into four key phases:

1. Foundational Research
2. Visioning Workshops
3. Draft Recommendations
4. Timeline & Implementation

## Foundational Research

Past experience has taught Resonance that successful Tourism Master Planning requires the participation and alignment of not only industry stakeholders, but those of the visitor and local community as well. As such, the process was designed to not only consult, but also to engage and collaborate with industry stakeholders, visitors, residents and the community at large.

It is for these reasons that the Tourism Master Plan for the Richmond Region focused on five key research activities:

1. Stakeholder Engagement
2. Community Survey
3. Visitor Survey
4. Destination Assessment
5. Sports Venue Audit

These five pieces of research, which were reviewed and critiqued by a steering committee of community leaders and industry stakeholders, led to important insights that were considered in the development of a future vision for the Richmond Region as a destination for visitors and residents and the resulting Tourism Master Plan developed by this project.



## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

### *Identifying Strategic Issues and Opportunities for the Richmond Region*

Resonance met with approximately 115 stakeholders in 50 sessions during the week of January 14, 2019 and additional calls held the week of January 21st. The primary purpose of these discussions was to identify participants' opinions, aspirations and ideas (issues and opportunities) for the future of the Richmond Region as a destination for visitors and place for residents to live, work and play.

*Stakeholders were eager to contribute their ideas and thoughts, providing a wide range of issues and opportunities for the Richmond Region to explore. The intensity of engagement and contribution from stakeholders (industry, government, nonprofits and residents), coupled with the outstanding feedback from the community survey illustrate that members of the Richmond Region community care deeply about the destination and wanted to ensure their voices were heard in the process.*



## COMMUNITY SURVEY

### *Opinions and Perceptions of Residents about Tourism and Quality of Life in the Richmond Region*

In consultation with Richmond Region Tourism staff, Resonance developed an online survey to identify and gauge residents' perceptions on a variety of key characteristics with respect to livability, culture, economy and sense of place. During this foundational step of the Tourism Master Planning process, the goal was to identify and define general attitudes towards living in the Richmond Region and tourism's impact on resident quality of life. More than 2,100 residents of the Richmond Region community participated in the survey.

*Richmond Region residents recognize the importance and benefits of the tourism industry, with 95% of residents believing that tourism is good for the region. However, residents consistently underestimate the industry's size and value to the Richmond Region. The Community Survey Report identified opportunities for the Richmond Region tourism industry to improve the telling of its story and educate the public regarding the overall value of tourism to the region's economy. The report also identified key contributors to local quality of life, such as nature and parks, restaurants and outdoor activities, and highlighted opportunities for the tourism industry to play a role in enhancing these elements of the destination.*



## VISITOR SURVEY

### *Opinions and Perceptions of Previous Visitors about their Experiences in the Richmond Region*

In consultation with Richmond Region Tourism staff, Resonance developed an online survey to identify and gauge previous visitors' travel habits, preferences and perceptions of the Richmond Region. The goal was to identify and define the types of travelers who are attracted to the Richmond Region, what they value and how the region is delivering on their expectations. More than 1,000 previous visitors to the Richmond Region participated in the survey.

*Visitors to the Richmond Region are coming to the region to experience its history and landmarks, but also its restaurants, museums, nature and parks and culture and diversity. Younger visitors appear to be more motivated by the destination's culinary, outdoor and nightlife experiences, while older visitors are more motivated by the region's history and role as the state capital. Visitors to the Richmond region have a more positive perception of the destination after visiting the region than they did prior to visiting, an important outcome as perceived quality of place becomes increasingly important for tourism and economic development.*

## DESTINATION ASSESSMENT

### *Benchmarking Richmond Region Experiences vs 14 Other Competitive Destinations (Actual and Aspirational)*

Resonance conducted a quantitative assessment of the Richmond Region's destination assets and experiences, utilizing a combination of social media reviews and core performance statistics collected directly from TripAdvisor and Yelp. This research benchmarked both the quantity of tourism assets and the quality of these experiences against 14 competing and aspirational destinations. The focus of this activity was to measure supply-side performance from one destination to the next and better understand the competitive advantages – and weaknesses – of the Richmond Region.

*Compared to its competitive set, Richmond falls in the lower tier (11th place) in terms of the number of quality experiences within the destination on an absolute scale, meaning the sheer number of quality experiences is being measured. Museums and sights and landmarks stood out as advantages for Richmond, while the lowest-performing categories were theater and concerts, nightlife and vacation rentals. The fact that Richmond outperforms when indexed for visitors rather than residents, indicates that the destination has the opportunity to grow its visitor economy to meet the supply of experiences available and the quality of life for residents should not be affected by visitor volume at this point in time.*

## SPORTS TOURISM VENUE ANALYSIS

### *Benchmarking Current Sports Tourism Venues*

The objective of the Sports Tourism Venue Analysis was to assess the quantity and quality of sports tourism venues in the Richmond Region. The consultant team, led by Huddle Up Group, visited 29 sites encompassing nearly 50 existing or planned sports and entertainment facilities, several of which have multiple sports and/or special event uses. Each of these venues was benchmarked against national industry standards.



## Visioning Workshops

The results and information from these five research activities were then used in two visioning workshops to gain broad input and envision/develop priorities for the Richmond Region that might be addressed by the project.

The first industry workshop was held with key stakeholders to define the Visitor of the Future, while the second industry workshop examined regional strengths, weaknesses, issues and opportunities and considered how these might inform the Tourism Master Plan.

## Draft Recommendations

The results of the two workshops were then compiled into a Draft Recommendations Report, which was presented to the Richmond Region Tourism Board of Directors for consideration, feedback and comments.

## Timelines & Implementation

A long-term plan such as this can be overwhelming when taken as a whole. It is for this reason that an implementation strategy has been included at the end of the document to guide Richmond Region Tourism and its partners in developing annual plans and resources necessary to move this plan forward to implementation.

### BY THE NUMBERS



**INDUSTRY  
STAKEHOLDER  
INTERVIEWS**

**MORE THAN**

**2,100**

**RESIDENTS SURVEYED**



**MORE THAN  
1,000  
VISITORS  
SURVEYED**



**MORE  
THAN**



**WORKSHOP  
PARTICIPANTS**

# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

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# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

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## Objective

Create a ten-year Tourism Master Plan which builds a clear vision for our aspirational future for tourism and its impact on the region as a whole.

## Vision

A more livable, lovable and prosperous Richmond Region through responsibly grown tourism for the benefit of all in our community.



## Goals

As a starting point for the Tourism Master Plan, we asked stakeholders to guide the process by prioritizing the goals that they felt were important for the project. The goals in order of priority are:

### 1. VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The Richmond Region will create, enhance and deliver destination products and services, activities and events that create a compelling, must-visit destination experience that reflects the unique environment, culture and character of the region.

### 2. QUALITY OF LIFE

The Richmond Region will create, enhance and deliver destination products and services, activities and events that preserve and create a high quality of life experience for residents.

### 3. WORKFORCE

The Richmond Region's tourism businesses will become employers of choice for residents seeking long-term careers, offering exceptional opportunities for growth in the competitive tourism industry.

### 4. GROWTH

The Richmond Region's tourism industry will deliver competitive growth that is consistent with optimized carrying capacity and that maximizes the value of the visitor economy.

### 5. INVESTMENT

The Richmond Region will foster expansion of private sector investment in tourism development and promotion, and the coordination of public infrastructure investment to achieve optimum benefits for the tourism industry and residents.



# RICHMOND REGION'S VISITORS

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# RICHMOND REGION'S VISITORS

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The Richmond Region is an enticing destination that attracts many types of visitors – but we can't appeal to everyone. We must focus our resources on particular segments who appreciate the region's character, its people and its experience offerings, and offer the greatest opportunity to grow our tourism industry for the benefit of all in our community.

Focusing on these audiences means that we should concentrate our resources and efforts – be they marketing, product development, hospitality services or experiences – on these segments. This doesn't mean we forget about other groups; rather, we choose to focus on these four segments as they represent the biggest potential for the Richmond Region's tourism growth.



## Family-Oriented Travelers

Family-oriented travelers are an important part of the region's current visitor profile. These travelers typically take fewer and shorter trips that are close to home. They demonstrate a greater interest in family vacations with kids and multi-generational vacations compared to other segments and place greater importance on safety, cost and favorable climate. To maximize the impact of these travelers, it is critical to connect them with multiple elements of the Richmond Region visitor experience.



## Experience Enthusiasts

There's nothing an Experience Enthusiast won't try at least once, and their favorite places are ones where they can try every experience and activity—they like to immerse themselves in a destination from every possible angle. Getting the authentic version of a place is of growing importance to this audience. They want to know where the hidden gems are, and they want to connect with the local culture and people. Success in appealing to this market depends on our ability to engage locals in the conversation about the Richmond Region and ensure a harmonious interaction between visitors and locals.

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## Sophisticated Explorers

This worldly global wanderer, experienced, curious and sophisticated, seeks the next level of localism—a destination they can explore that helps them discover the unexpected about themselves. They don't just want to dip their toes into a place; they want, well, a deep dive. To feel what the Richmond Region feels. Do what the Richmond Region does. Be what the Richmond Region is. The Richmond Region currently offers experiences for Sophisticated Explorers in our museums, historic sites, arts and culture, but this effort needs to be improved upon to truly appeal to this audience.

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## Active Adventurers

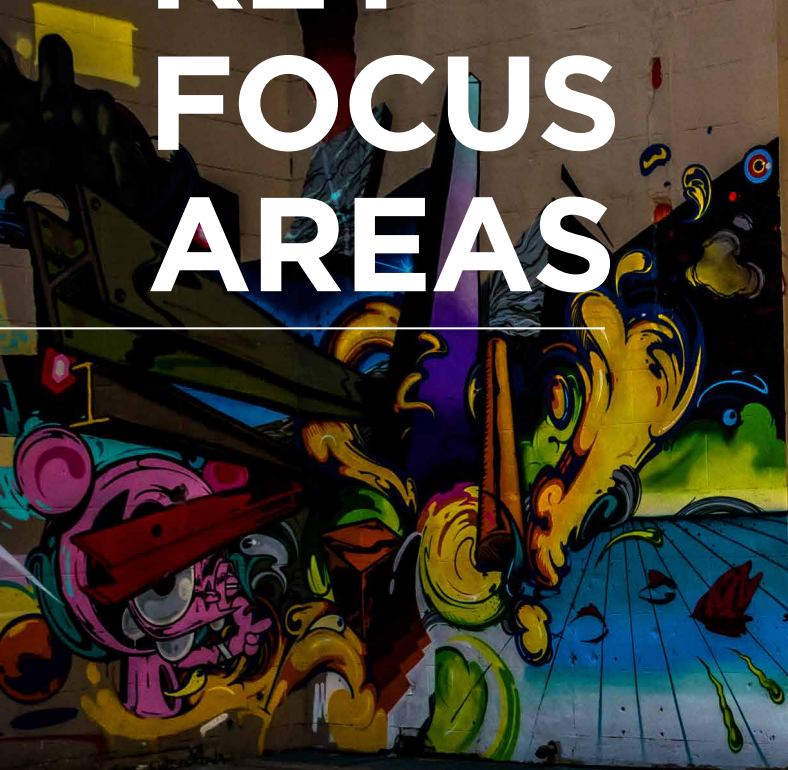
Active Adventurers are healthy, fit travelers who are deeply interested in being in nature and participating in outdoor activities. They're more likely to travel greater distances to get to their destination and once they're in place, they want to engage with nature, outdoor sports and perhaps athletic competitions. While they might have a particular expertise in one sport or another, they like vacations that allow them to try new things—they're experimenters and explorers who like to learn, not just hard-core risk takers. For this market, the Richmond Region product has not yet reached its potential; we need to consider how to develop products and services to better meet the needs of this segment.





# KEY FOCUS AREAS

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# KEY FOCUS AREAS

To realize the vision for Richmond Region tourism, we have distilled the Tourism Master Plan recommendations into three strategic areas of focus:

## 1. EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

*The Richmond Region has a unique identity and offers experiences that are an authentic product of the region's environment and its people. How do we best communicate and build on that?*

- Cultural Tourism
- Adventure Tourism
- Sports Tourism

## 2. INFRASTRUCTURE & INVESTMENT

*How do we build places and products that take advantage of potential opportunities, make our strengths even more compelling, and make the Richmond Region sustainable and enjoyable for residents and visitors?*

- Headquarter Hotel(s)
- Greater Richmond Convention Center
- James River
- Placemaking
- Connectivity & Mobility
- Sports Facilities

## 3. INDUSTRY ADVANCEMENT & ADVOCACY

*What means the most to us as Richmond Region residents or to our visitors? Where do we need to take a stand and work to improve situations that will enrich the quality of life or visitor experiences for all?*

- Meetings & Conventions
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Resident Perception
- Workforce Development
- Tourism Investment





# EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Experiential travel isn't particularly new. There's been growing demand around culinary travel, cultural exploration and activity-based travel experiences for a number of years. But the demand for experiential travel shows no signs of slowing down.

Travelers today want more than a simple visit to a new destination or days spent relaxing on a beach. Instead, the travel they're seeking is an experience of the world that goes deep—one that changes them in ways they may not even be aware of. The Tourism Master Planning research unveiled opportunities to enhance and develop tourism experiences within the Richmond Region that meet the needs of these contemporary travelers.

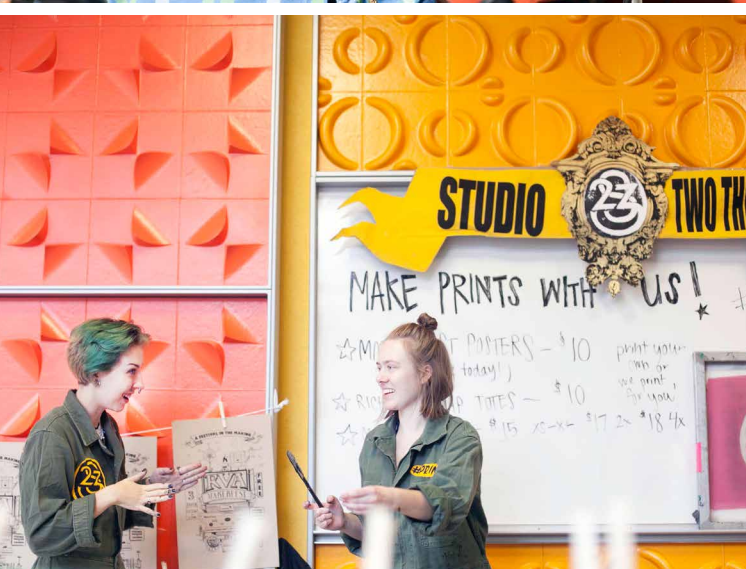
Today, tourism experiences that best exemplify this transformative travel experience meet at least one of the following criteria: they integrate multiple areas of tourism (such as cultural tourism, adventure tourism, culinary tourism, etc.), they have a hands-on learning aspect, and they are social.



## Cultural Tourism

The demand from travelers for more local and authentic travel experiences is now mainstream. Today, though, the definition of localism is extending beyond the neighborhood food truck, the local band, and the bar in a warehouse district selling craft beer. That's because many cities now have their own homegrown food trucks, bands, beer, and neighborhoods. These once-authentic experiences are no longer differentiators.

There is an opportunity to dig deeper into the Richmond Region's DNA to better understand in the short-term what differentiates the Richmond Region's cultural experience from that of other cities, and for the long term, understand the creative, collaborative undercurrent which drives the Richmond Region's cultural identity. Heritage tourism and culinary tourism represent two key opportunities for the Richmond Region to connect culture with the tourism experience in the region.







## HERITAGE TOURISM

There's no shortage of history in the Richmond Region, and this history continues to be a primary draw for visitors to the region. The region has a unique story to explore that can connect visitors and residents to the history and heritage of the destination and its people. The narrative and presentation of historical assets in the Richmond Region continue to evolve, and community leaders are beginning to offer a more bold and active approach.

To achieve the fullest potential of these assets, the Richmond Region should develop heritage tourism experiences which are authentic and engaging for both visitors and residents. Heritage tourism experiences should be easily connected for visitors, and the region's history and heritage should be integrated into the broader tourism experience throughout the region.

## CULINARY TOURISM

Richmond has made a name for itself as a serious culinary destination over the past decade, garnering attention from global media outlets such as National Geographic and Condé Nast Traveler. However, in order to attract a broader audience and meet the demands of the next generation of food travelers, the Richmond Region will need to develop a more integrated culinary experience.

The types of experiences that define the new era of food tourism are about more than just food or beverages, according to a recent report from Skift entitled "The New Era of Food Tourism: Trends and Best Practices for Stakeholders." Ideally, the region should integrate the gastronomy element into the overall experience of the traveler and not treat this as a stand-alone destination product.

The new culinary traveler is not only seeking authentic and localized experiences, but also a sense of discovery and connection to place. The Richmond Region's food tourism experiences shouldn't be about just tasting food or beverages, but should go deeper, authentically telling the Richmond Region story through food and drink as a way to attract and interact with visitors.

## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

Richmond Region Tourism

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

Chefs, CultureWorks, Museum Directors, Regional Neighborhood Associations, RVA Makers, Tour Operators, VCUarts Center for the Creative Economy, Venture Richmond

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism will collect, review and consider information and case studies from other destinations around the country and further afield to determine best practices in developing and promoting cultural tourism. Suggested case studies include Austin, TX, Chicago, IL and Bermuda.
- Richmond Region Tourism will create and host a Cultural Tourism Working Group, with the goal of developing a Cultural Tourism Plan for the Richmond Region. This group would include leaders in culinary, arts, music, heritage and more.
- The Working Group will identify cultural experiences, attractions and events across the region and collaborate on ways to reimagine what already exists and develop new cultural experiences.
- Richmond Region Tourism will connect the region's culture to a place branding strategy by focusing on what makes the region's culture unique and spotlighting local characters and stories to personalize the region.
- Richmond Region Tourism will integrate elements of the cultural tourism plan into its "I Am Tourism" Ambassador Program, to engage, educate and activate members of the community to become knowledgeable and influential representatives of cultural tourism for the region.

### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments and agencies are encouraged to actively participate in the Cultural Tourism Working Group and contribute to discussions, assessment and strategies related to cultural tourism in the Richmond Region.
- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments and business organizations are encouraged to invest in and support efforts to develop the region's creative economy. Such efforts would include recruiting and developing local creative talent and businesses, supporting existing creative efforts, as well as a need for creative products developed locally.
- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments and agencies are encouraged to invest in the preservation of the region's built environment and cultural heritage.
- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments and agencies are encouraged to invest in existing and future cultural and historic districts that exemplify the region's culture and diversity.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- The Richmond Region hospitality and tourism industries are encouraged to actively participate in the Cultural Tourism Working Group to contribute insight, experience and expertise to the initiative, as well as deliver products and services that are necessary and appropriate to a successful Cultural Tourism initiative and experience.
- The Richmond Region hospitality and tourism industries are encouraged to engage with local creatives and makers to build awareness of their stories and incorporate their products into the region's tourism products, services and experiences.





## Adventure Tourism

According to a recent study from the Adventure Travel Trade Association and Outside Magazine, today's adventure travelers place less focus on risk and more focus on being in a natural environment, learning and meaningful experiences. Kayaking and rafting were two of the activities most associated with adventure travel by the new adventure traveler. Furthermore, kayaking and rafting were listed as top activities in which adventure travelers would like to enhance their skills on their next adventure / sports-focused trip.

As a result, the Richmond Region is well positioned and should attract these visitors by showcasing the region's proximity to the James River and unique access to Class III and IV rapids in an urban setting. To do so requires developing and enhancing outdoor experiences in the region such as kayaking, rafting, hiking, biking and climbing, which tap into the destination's park system and other natural assets.





## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

Richmond Region Tourism

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

Friends of the James River Park, Parks and Recreation Departments, James River Association, Sports Backers, Tour Operators

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

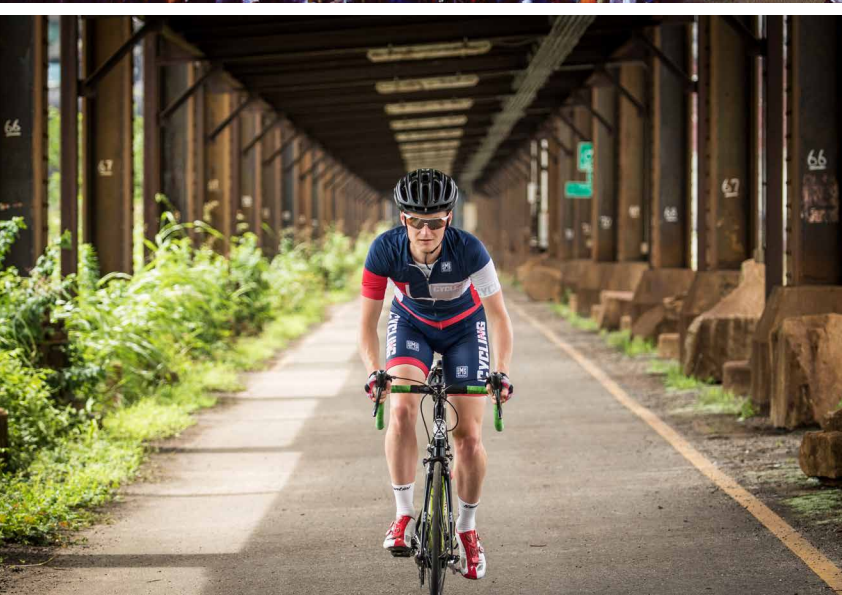
- Richmond Region Tourism will conduct an outdoor experience audit in the Richmond Region with the goal of determining activities, experiences, organizational and community-wide opportunities, as well as gaps that may limit growth.
- Richmond Region Tourism will connect the region's outdoors activities to a place branding strategy by focusing on what makes the region's outdoors opportunities unique, and spotlighting signature events such as Dominion Energy Riverrock to position the region as an adventure tourism destination.
- Richmond Region Tourism will advocate for better visitor access to the James River Park and other regional park systems, as well as experiences and amenities within these outdoor spaces that benefit visitors and residents of the region.
- Richmond Region Tourism will work with the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) to host an AdventureConnect meeting in the region to bring together local adventure tour operators and organizations. The Richmond Region should also consider hosting ATTA's AdventureELEVATE to showcase the region as an adventure tourism destination.

### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- Richmond Region county and municipal governments and agencies are encouraged to review and amend their outdoor experience master plans (parks, recreation, etc.) to set forth a new and updated vision for outdoor experiences for residents and visitors.
- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments and agencies are encouraged to invest in the preservation and sustainability of the region's natural environment.
- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments and agencies are encouraged to implement the Richmond Riverfront Plan and the Regional Rivers Plan to better connect visitors and residents with the James, Appomattox, Chickahominy, and Pamunkey Rivers.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- The Richmond Region hospitality and tourism industries are encouraged to work with Richmond Region Tourism, and local, state and federal government agencies (particularly Parks & Rec) to explore, consider, develop and launch new outdoor activities, experiences, events and festivals that increase the opportunities for residents and visitors to connect with the region's natural environment.
- The Richmond Region hospitality and tourism industries are encouraged to develop and enhance accommodations related to outdoor experiences, such as camping.



## Sports Tourism

Sports tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the travel industry today and has become a highly competitive business. Sporting events such as NASCAR, collegiate tournaments and youth tournaments bring thousands of visitors to the Richmond Region every year. These events contributed significantly to hotel occupancy in the Richmond Region in 2018, with NASCAR events driving three of the top four biggest individual days. In fact, eight out of the top 10 nights of highest occupancy had something to do with sports.

Sports tourism is about more than just hosting great events. It generates economic development through visitor spending as well as raising the profile of the destination and inspiring leisure tourism.

Sports tourism also creates social and community benefits, such as youth development, increased fitness levels and health, and community and cultural celebration. Some of these benefits occur at the time of the event, but most are legacies and will return value to the community over many years.

Recognizing that hosting sporting events is a stimulus to tourism development as well as an economic and community development tool, the Richmond Region must enact a strategic approach to bidding on, cultivating and hosting sporting events.



## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

Richmond Region Tourism

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

Local Schools & Universities, Parks & Recreation Departments, Sports Backers

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism will develop a Sports Tourism Strategic Plan to grow sports tourism in a strategic manner which supports economic development, drives leisure visitation and creates social and community legacies.
- Richmond Region Tourism will create a Sports Advisory Group to organize collective efforts and uncover event bid opportunities.
- Richmond Region Tourism will work with local jurisdictions and sports organizers to assess community desire and readiness for growth in various sports categories.
- Richmond Region Tourism will formalize its incentive program to evaluate opportunities and allocate resources efficiently.
- Richmond Region Tourism will utilize marketing and public relations efforts to connect sports tourism with the region's array of sporting activities, active lifestyle and people.
- Richmond Region Tourism will partner with local businesses to use sports tourism as an opportunity for talent attraction by exposing attendees to the region's offerings and showcasing the region's active lifestyle.
- Richmond Region Tourism will partner with local colleges and universities to use youth sports tourism as an opportunity for student recruitment.

### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments and agencies are encouraged to balance the recreational needs of local citizens with the social and economic benefits of sports event hosting.
- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments and agencies are encouraged to communicate the benefits of sports tourism and facilities to the general public.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- The Richmond Region hospitality and tourism industries are encouraged to contribute insight, experience and expertise to the initiative.

# INFRASTRUCTURE & INVESTMENT

The Richmond Region requires investment in our facilities and infrastructure to maintain, refresh and upgrade the existing tourism experience and develop new products, address infrastructure gaps, innovate and capitalize on future growth opportunities. This investment needs to be well targeted and focused on priority investment needs in line with tourism and wider policy goals, to maximize value for money and investment returns, avoid problems associated with excess or scarce capacity, and contribute to other economic, environmental and social goals.

These proposals are expected to be investments in hardware and of scale; they take time to conceive, necessitate public engagement, implicate architecture and design, and often require programming. Some of these developments and investments could become the signatures of the destination, the icons, the must-see places in the future.

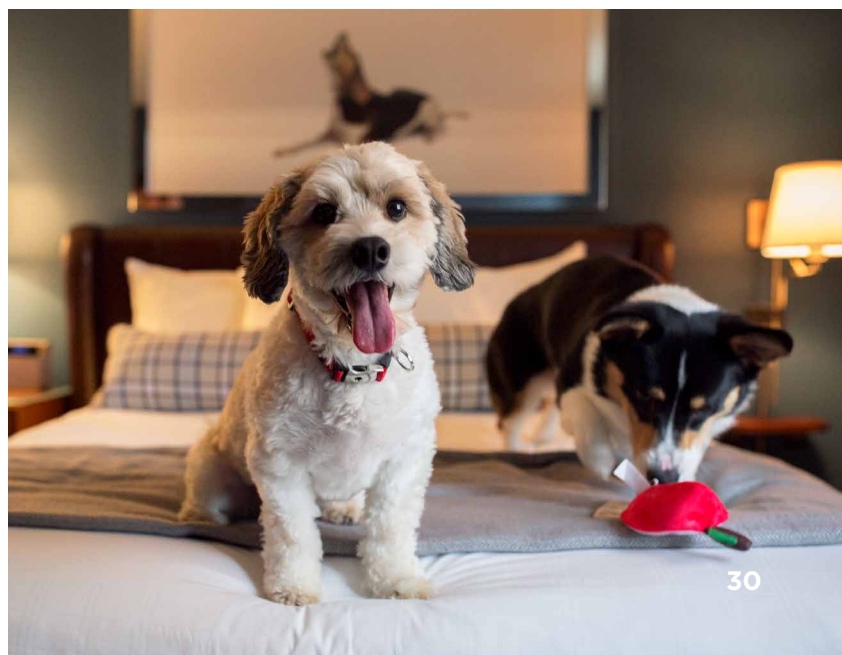
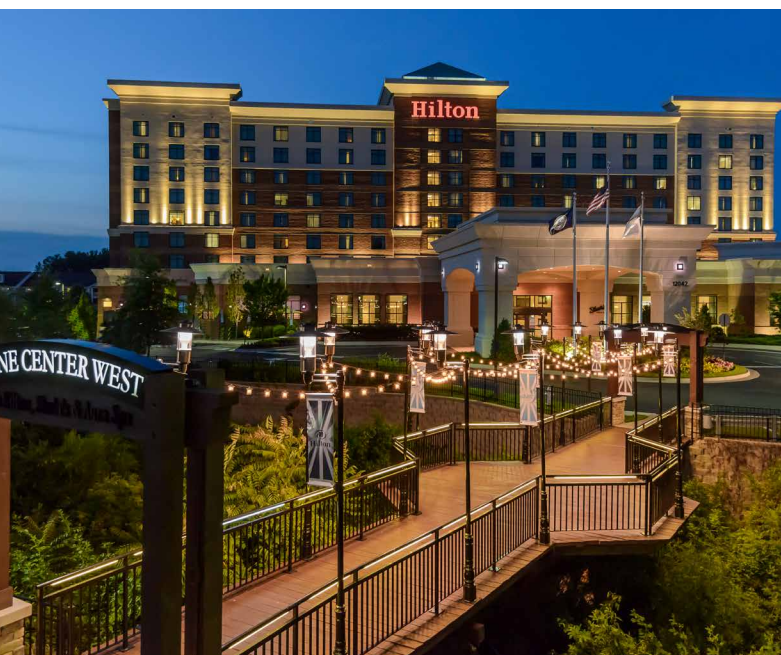
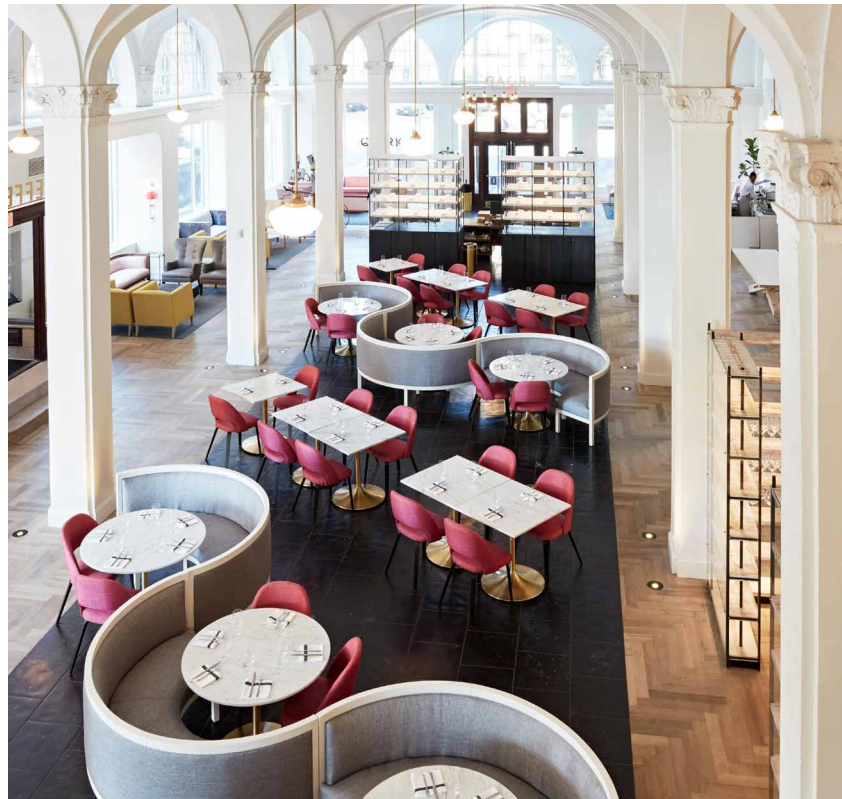




## Headquarters Hotel(s)

Over the past decade convention centers in cities of all sizes have recognized the importance of a headquarters hotel in attracting conventions and conferences that generate significant economic impact in a market. Typically headquarters hotels are either attached to the convention center or immediately adjacent to it and within an easy walking distance.

Research and stakeholder engagement have identified the development of a headquarters hotel (for the Greater Richmond Convention Center) as a need in the Richmond Region to provide much-needed additional room inventory for business, group, and meetings and convention visitors to the region.



## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

City of Richmond

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

NH District Corporation, Richmond Region  
Hospitality Association, Richmond Region  
Tourism, Venture Richmond

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism will continue to advocate for the development of a headquarters hotel with direct access to the Greater Richmond Convention Center to make the facility potentially viable for larger meetings and conventions.
- Richmond Region Tourism, if required, will commission a Headquarters Hotel Feasibility and Impact Analysis to examine the market, the position of the hotel, a detailed projection of its operation and performance, the scale/positioning of the product and the economic business case for investment.

### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- Richmond Region municipal and county governments are encouraged to work with Richmond Region Tourism and hotel developers and owners to facilitate a headquarters hotel for the Greater Richmond Convention Center.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- Richmond Region hospitality and tourism partners are encouraged to advocate for the development of a headquarters hotel for the Greater Richmond Convention Center.





## Greater Richmond Convention Center

Convention center destinations across the U.S. and beyond are investing significant resources to remodel and modernize their meeting and conference facilities, as the competition for this lucrative business heats up. They're doing so in order to grab a bigger slice of the convention-spending pie. Such spending is on the rise: The U.S. meetings industry generated \$381 billion in 2017, according to a recent economic-impact study by Oxford Economics, an increase of 17 percent from the year before.

While conversations about convention centers typically include square footage figures and meeting room numbers, more meeting planners are looking for fully customizable spaces; a blank canvas by which they can create their event. Another big shift in convention center design is the trend toward opening the facility to the outside, making it more a part of the destination itself.



## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

Greater Richmond Convention Center Authority

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

City of Richmond, Chesterfield County, Hanover County, Henrico County, Richmond Region Tourism, Spectra Venue Management

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism will continue to advocate for investment in the enhancement and expansion of the Greater Richmond Convention Center.
- Richmond Region Tourism will collect and disseminate knowledge and trends related to meeting planner preferences and behavior in order to guide and prioritize renovations and investments in the Greater Richmond Convention Center.

### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- Richmond Region county and municipal governments are encouraged to work with Richmond Region Tourism and the Greater Richmond Convention Center Authority to continue to implement recommendations from Greater Richmond Convention Center Futures Study and update infrastructure, systems, operations and experiences to meet the evolving needs of meeting planners and enhance the facility's sense of place.
- Richmond Region county and municipal governments are encouraged to work with Richmond Region Tourism and the Greater Richmond Convention Center Authority to begin planning for an anticipated expansion of the Greater Richmond Convention Center in 2032.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

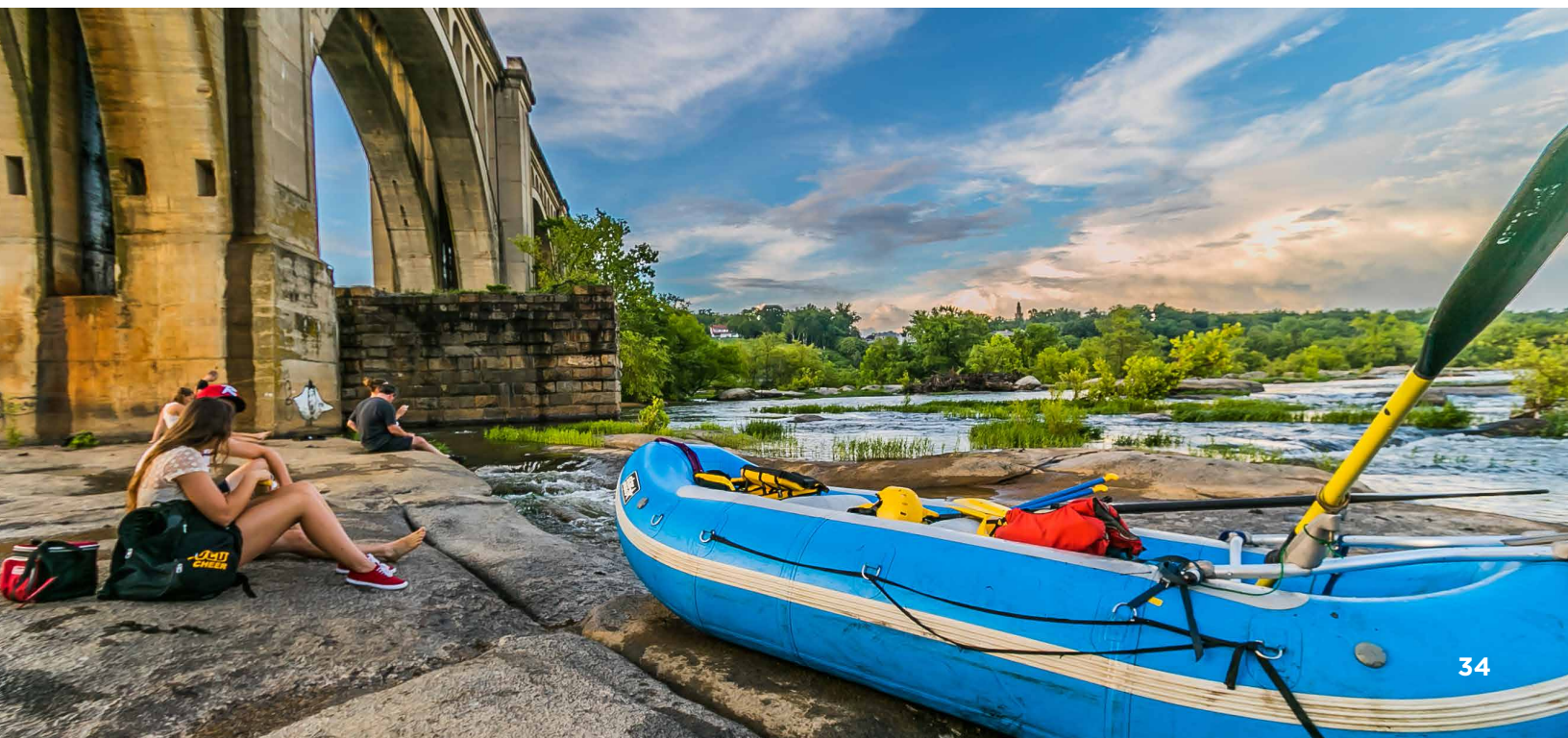
- Richmond Region hospitality and tourism partners are encouraged to advocate for the enhancement and expansion of the Greater Richmond Convention Center.





## James River

The James River is the beating heart of the Richmond Region. There aren't many cities, none in fact, where you can kayak and raft class III and IV rapids in an urban setting. With more than more than 2 million visitors in 2018, the James River Park accommodates more than any other park in the region. The Richmond Region tourism industry should work alongside The Friends of the James River Park to successfully implement the 10-year Park Master Plan and the Regional Rivers Plan with particular focus on improving access and park experiences for both visitors and residents.





## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

Friends of the James River Park

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

Parks & Recreation Departments, James River Association, Richmond Region Tourism, Sports Backers

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism will play an active role in the implementation of the James River 10-year Park Master Plan and the Regional Rivers Plan to ensure the visitor perspective is considered and alignment occurs with the recommendations of the Tourism Master Plan. Accessibility and enhancing the quality of the experience for users should be of particular focus.
- Richmond Region Tourism will develop and promote materials to educate visitors on how to responsibly experience the James River Park system to help foster a culture of stewardship among park users.

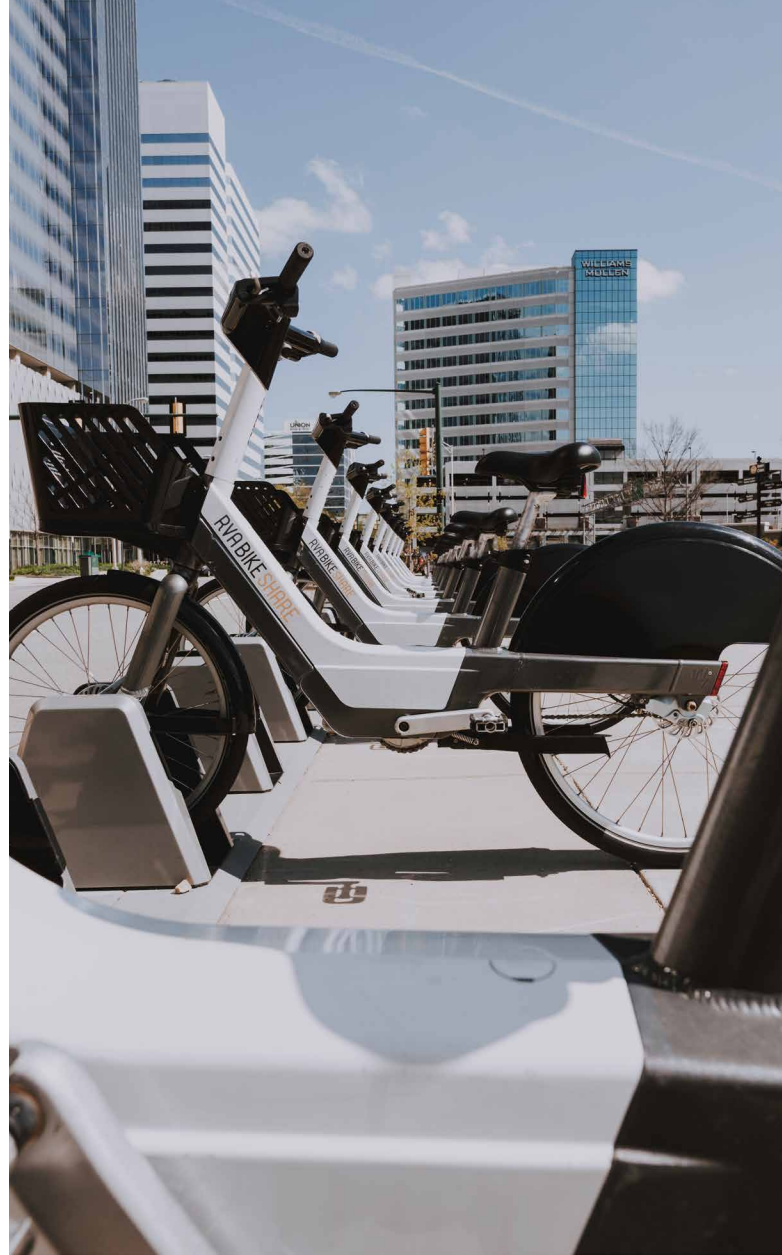
### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments and agencies are encouraged to invest in park-related and regional trail projects.
- Richmond Region municipal and county governments are encouraged to include access points to the James River Parks system in regional wayfinding efforts.
- Richmond Region municipal and county governments are encouraged to implement the Regional Rivers Plan and include the Appomattox, Chickahominy and Pamunkey Rivers and their waterfronts in development plans.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- The Richmond Region hospitality and tourism industries will assist with any and all private sector information, data, research experience and expertise available to implement a successful James River 10-year Park Master Plan.





## Connectivity & Mobility

The Richmond Region's geographic location is viewed as a tourism asset, with 45 percent of the U.S. population living within a day's drive of the destination. Additionally, the region's dynamic transportation system incorporates two international airports, with Richmond International Airport serving as the primary provider for the region and Dulles International Airport providing ancillary service.

However, mobility and transportation challenges exist within the region and these are often top-of-mind for visitors and local stakeholders, who cited issues related to navigation and connectivity to the region's neighborhoods, attractions and experiences.

As the Richmond Region grows, greater mobility and connectivity will become more important in ensuring that the Richmond Region remains an attractive destination.

Richmond Region Tourism should work with state, county and city agencies and departments to ensure that visitor transportation needs (public, mass and private): connectivity, destinations, timings and accessibility are considered and addressed in their broader transportation strategies and plans.

## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

Capital Region Airport Commission, Coalition for Smart Transit, Greater Richmond Transit Company, James River Transportation, Richmond Region Tourism, RVA Rapid Transit, The Capital Region Collaborative, Venture Richmond, Virginia Capital Trail, Virginia Transit Association

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism will participate in state, county and city transportation forums held to help identify options that leverage existing transportation solutions.
- Richmond Region Tourism will advocate for a Visitor Transportation Strategy for the Richmond Region, which integrates city and county transportation strategies.
- Richmond Region Tourism will conduct visitor flow research to assess true demand impact from out-of-town visitors to be used in future transportation policy considerations as well as local campaigns.
- Richmond Region Tourism will promote, communicate and demonstrate to visitors the ease of car-free visits to the Richmond Region.
- Richmond Region Tourism will continue to drive visitor demand and work with the suggested partners to increase air service development opportunities for Richmond Region residents and visitors.

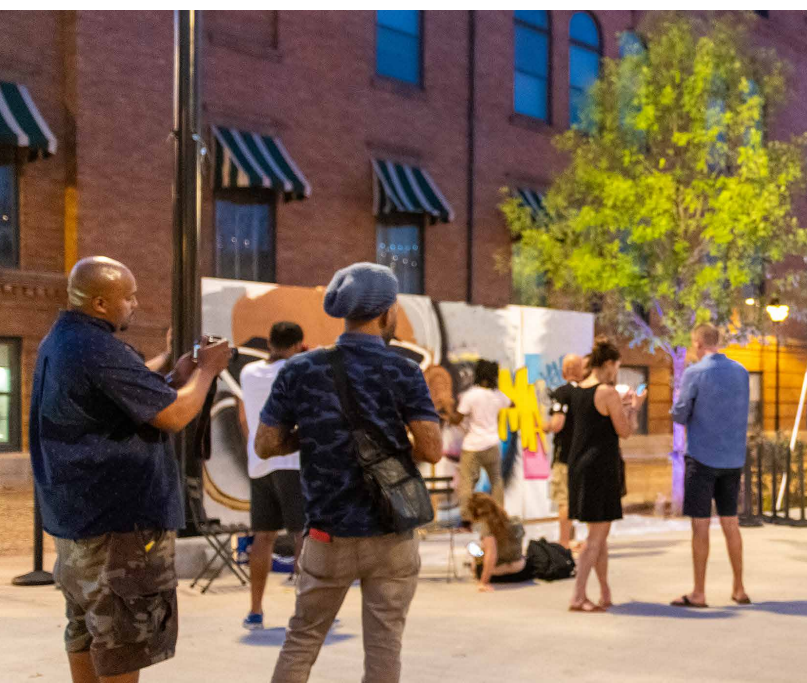
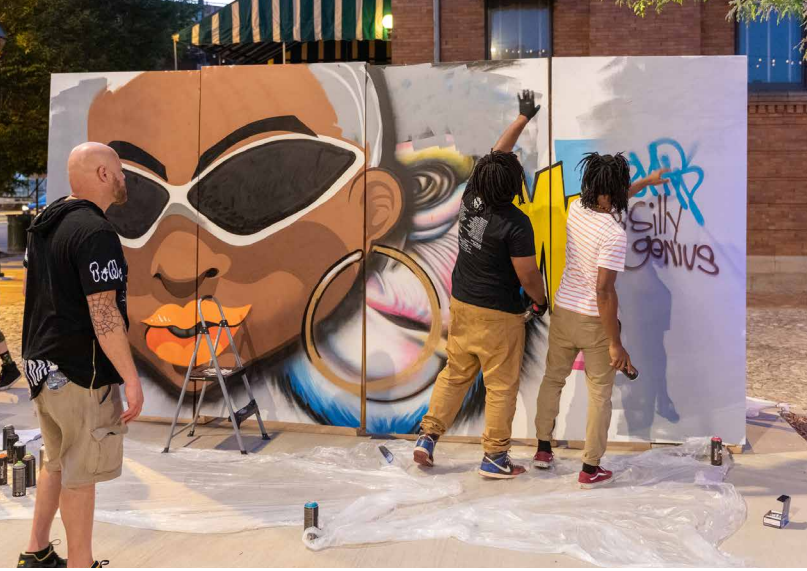
### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments are encouraged to create and implement a visitor transportation strategy for the Richmond Region that ties into existing transportation master plans for the region.
- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments are encouraged to develop policies to support alternative transportation, including public transportation, streetcars and ride-sharing services.
- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments are encouraged to enhance safety, security and connectivity of public transit and bike routes.
- The Richmond Region county governments are encouraged to adopt the City of Richmond's wayfinding design to create a more cohesive regional experience and incorporate regional branding.
- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments are encouraged to invest in the development of a trail from Ashland to Petersburg following completion of the Ashland to Petersburg Trail corridor study.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- Richmond Region hospitality and tourism partners are encouraged to ensure that tourism is "at the table" when transportation policies are taking shape (state, county, city and local).
- Richmond Region hospitality and tourism partners are encouraged to create incentives for visitors to use alternate forms of transit.





## Placemaking

Placemaking is an approach to community and destination planning that enhances underutilized spaces and places within a destination, transforming them into attractive gathering places that foster social cohesion, enhancing economic well-being in the community, and elevating the quality of life for locals and visitors.

Strategic placemaking seeks to make investments in the renovation or creation of a public space to also attract investment, residents and/or tenants to the area that surrounds it. Creative placemaking involves engaging

the arts, whether visual, musical or otherwise, to enhance these underutilized spaces. Tactical placemaking takes a “lighter, cheaper” approach and involves making a temporary change in design or use of a space—for example, something as simple as closing a block of a street to cars on the weekend, converting it into a public plaza with bistro tables and chairs.

All these placemaking techniques can be employed to enhance the Richmond Region experience, particularly in areas of downtown Richmond that are currently underdeveloped.

## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

Venture Richmond

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

Beautiful RVA, Capital Regional Collaborative, CultureWorks, Community Foundation, Richmond Region Tourism

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism will collaborate with Venture Richmond, City of Richmond, Capital Regional Collaborative and downtown districts to advance ongoing downtown revitalization.
- Richmond Region Tourism will explore tactical placemaking opportunities to foster community pride and showcase the region. One such opportunity would be the creation and placement of RVA signs in some of the most photographed and visited areas of the region.

### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments and business organizations are encouraged to collaborate with Venture Richmond to develop placemaking strategies to connect communities and revitalize underdeveloped areas of the region.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- Richmond Region hospitality and tourism partners are encouraged to lend their expertise to Venture Richmond to help it achieve its mission to enhance the vitality of the community.





## Sports Facilities

Sports tourism supports infrastructure and facilities that serve the community for many years, leaving a lasting legacy for residents of the destination. These facilities allow constituents to expand local programming, leading to increased revenue for jurisdictions and more importantly, a more active and healthier community.

The Richmond Region has a solid inventory of outdoor venues to use in attracting marquee tournaments and events. However, new facility development could greatly enhance the region's ability to capitalize on the growing sports tourism market and in turn, support a more active and healthier Richmond Region.





## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

Richmond Region Tourism

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

Local Schools & Universities, Parks & Recreation Departments, Sports Backers

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism will commission a region-wide facility master plan, pulling together existing county and city plans to identify areas of need, costs, and potential impacts. This master plan would serve as a launching pad to enhance the area's existing venues and to potentially develop new facilities that can positively impact tourism in the area.

### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments and agencies are encouraged to invest in sports facility enhancement and development. Notable existing and proposed facilities requiring investment are the Richmond arena, Henrico Field House and VCU Athletic Complex.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- The Richmond Region hospitality and tourism industries are encouraged to advocate for regional investment in sports facility enhancement and development.

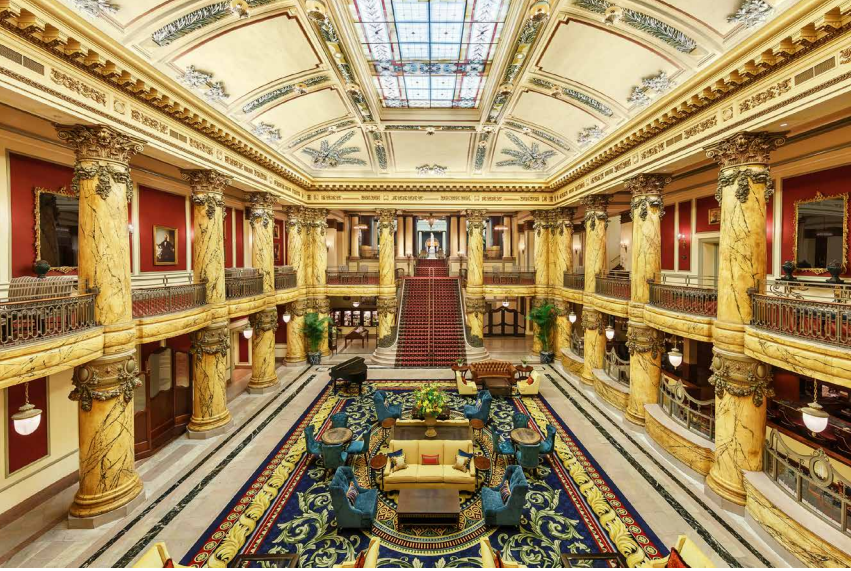


# INDUSTRY ADVANCEMENT & ADVOCACY

Tourism collaboration is 36 years strong in the Richmond Region. In 1983, the counties of Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico and the City of Richmond partnered to invest in a regional tourism organization to leverage resources to drive visitation through leading-edge travel promotion. Since then, Richmond Region Tourism has grown the economy in our community by enhancing its public image as a dynamic place to live, work and visit, and attracting leisure travelers, meetings, conventions and tournaments.

Today, tourism in our region is stronger than ever, supporting the livelihoods of more than 24,000 hardworking residents. Our regional footprint has also grown, welcoming the Town of Ashland, New Kent County and Powhatan County under the Richmond Region Tourism umbrella.

As a regional leader, we must devote capacity, influence, skills and resources to projects that speak both to the mission of marketing the Richmond Region as a destination, as well as advance initiatives that improve the destination experience for both visitors and residents.



## Business Events Economic Sector Strategy

More and more meeting planners are looking toward midsize destinations such as the Richmond Region to host their programs—groups are getting priced out of the larger metropolitan areas as rates for hotel rooms, meeting venues, food and beverage, and other ancillary spend increase incrementally every year. At the same time, midsize cities have undergone sweeping urban revitalization efforts, building up their infrastructure and transportation links. They've increased air service, hotel and venue capacity, and enhanced their visitor experience exponentially.

As a result, the Richmond Region is positioned to utilize business events as a global distribution channel of innovation that drives long-term business outcomes for both visiting groups and the local community. Moving forward, the region should be focusing more strategically on how to further develop, leverage and measure the legacy impacts derived from meetings and events.





## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

Richmond Region Tourism

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

BioScience companies, Capital Region Collaborative, city and county economic development agencies, Corporate Services companies, Finance and Insurance companies, Food & Beverage companies, Greater Richmond Partnership, Information Technology companies, Virginia Biotechnology Research Park, Virginia Commonwealth University

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism will develop a knowledge-based, business event development strategy to spotlight the region's chief economic drivers and the intellectual capital that organizers want to leverage for their meetings and conferences.
- Richmond Region Tourism will expand and enhance the RVA Champions program to become an official network of Richmond Region professionals who are experts in their respective fields. This network of top thinkers, innovators and researchers will work with Richmond Region Tourism to bring meetings and conventions to the region. Examples of existing programs to study and consider include Toronto's 'Leaders Circle' program, Sydney's 'Global Ambassador' program and Melbourne's 'Club Melbourne Ambassador' program.
- Richmond Region Tourism will collaborate with the suggested partners to produce sales and marketing materials highlighting the region's expertise in key economic sectors and supplementary information on specific organizations and individuals active in those industry verticals.

- Richmond Region Tourism will utilize industry standards and tools, such as the Event Impact Calculator developed by Oxford Economics and Destinations International, to develop a unified system to effectively measure and communicate the impact of meetings and events. In the short-term, the objective should be to develop commonality in measuring the immediate economic impacts of meetings and events in the region, while long-term objectives should focus on measuring legacy impacts derived from meetings and events, such as the development of new business relationships, new academic and scientific research, and new corporate investments in the region, to name a few.

### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- Greater Richmond Partnership, and city and county economic development organizations are encouraged to actively partner with Richmond Region Tourism in the development of a knowledge-based, business event development strategy.
- Community leaders are encouraged to join the RVA Champions program and work with Richmond Region Tourism to attract meetings and conventions in their respective areas of expertise.
- County and municipal officials, along with economic development officials throughout the region, are encouraged to connect with top sector decision-makers who attend Richmond Region meetings and conventions before, during and/ or after these meetings to promote the Richmond Region as a great location in which to create or relocate a business.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- Richmond Region hospitality and tourism leaders are encouraged to partner with regional economic development leaders and Richmond Region Tourism to host and engage top decision-makers that are considering moving their businesses or expanding them to the Richmond Region.



## Diversity & Inclusion

Tourism in the Richmond Region can contribute to both equity and economic growth by prioritizing inclusivity in efforts to attract and service visitors and ensure that tourism in the Richmond Region benefits all of our residents. In fact, many of the cities with the strongest tourism industries are known for their diversity and inclusion.

Richmond Region Tourism and its partners recognize and are focused on the economic and social opportunities of a diverse visitor market. At the same time, according to a recent report from the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, Richmond was among the cities with the highest

number of displaced African American residents by gentrification. Therefore, it should not be surprising that African American residents of the region were more likely to indicate they are concerned about tourism's impact on the community and agree that tourism makes housing too expensive for Richmond residents.

As such, there is a definite need and opportunity to engage the Richmond Region's diverse communities in the tourism industry (product development, curation and marketing) in order to set an example for other sectors and prove that cultural diversity is a tourism asset.



## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

Richmond Region Tourism

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

Diversity Richmond, Regional Government, Venture Richmond, Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism should share the unvarnished historical narrative about people of color in the Richmond Region to build a more inclusive narrative—and demonstrate how far we’ve come.
- Richmond Region Tourism should create and host a Diversity Working Group to assist in creating a strategy for recognizing and removing systemic barriers, access and opportunity, and promoting equity and inclusion in the region’s travel and tourism industry.
- Richmond Region Tourism should strategically advocate for and promote temporary and permanent placemaking activities and events which showcase the area’s diverse heritage and culture (i.e. 2nd Street Festival).
- Richmond Region Tourism will prioritize diversity and inclusion in the makeup of its Board of Directors, Committees and Working Groups.
- Richmond Region Tourism will build off its OutRVA and BLK RVA campaigns to connect the region’s diversity to a place branding strategy by focusing on the diverse experiences and inclusive nature of the region.

### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- The Richmond Region’s county and municipal governments are encouraged to work with community partners to promote equity and inclusion throughout the region, producing measurable improvements and disparity reductions.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- Richmond Region hospitality and tourism leaders are encouraged to engage with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities to develop a plan to address diversity issues and embrace inclusion in the hospitality and tourism industry.



## Resident Perception

Becoming a successful visitor destination starts with a proud resident mindset. The connection to a destination that today's visitors seek begins with the local people and the experience of being part – even if only temporarily – of a shared sense of localism. Therefore, the support of our residents throughout the entire region is crucial to our ability to stand out as a unique and local destination with global appeal. Our locals need to be so proud of their hometown that they want to share it even more.

The vast majority of residents believe the Richmond Region is a destination that travelers want to visit, and nearly all say they would encourage friends and family to visit the region. We must engage with residents to ensure they are fully aware of the diverse set of experiences available in the region, and help visitors gain more access to local recommendations or easier access to experiencing the local lifestyle.





## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

Richmond Region Tourism

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

Capital Region Collaborative, ChamberRVA, PR Agencies & Influencers, Regional Neighborhood Associations, RVA Makers

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism will develop a citizen engagement strategy to activate locals and help enhance their knowledge and perception of the region.
- Richmond Region Tourism will launch a Visit Me in RVA campaign, encouraging residents to invite friends and family to visit the Richmond Region during an activated weekend.
- Richmond Region Tourism will utilize placemaking strategies to create instagrammable moments throughout the region, encouraging locals to share their experiences and pride in the Richmond Region.
- Richmond Region Tourism will expand the awareness of and participation in its I Am Ambassador program by developing an online component to help provide visitor-facing employees in the region with the knowledge, tools and resources they need to be ambassadors for the region.

- Richmond Region Tourism will engage entrepreneurs, inventors, makers, and civic-minded enterprises and foundations to connect the local voices of progress and share stories of inspiration.
- Richmond Region Tourism will reference the Tourism Master Plan when taking policy positions or advocating for the industry to continually reinforce the notion that residents contributed to tourism planning.

### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments and business organizations are encouraged to invest in programming and placemaking opportunities which foster local community pride and direct attention and energy to neglected public spaces.

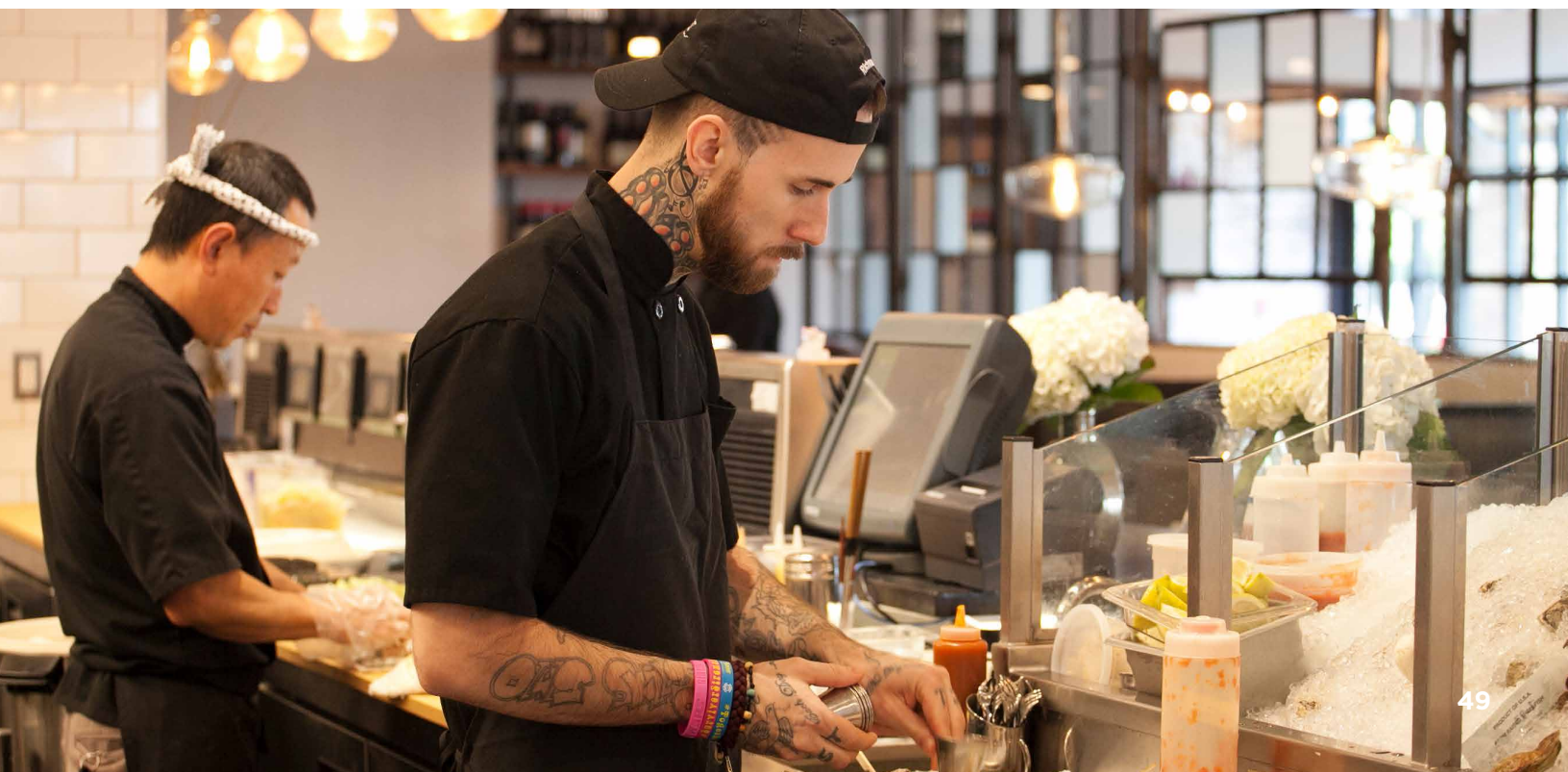
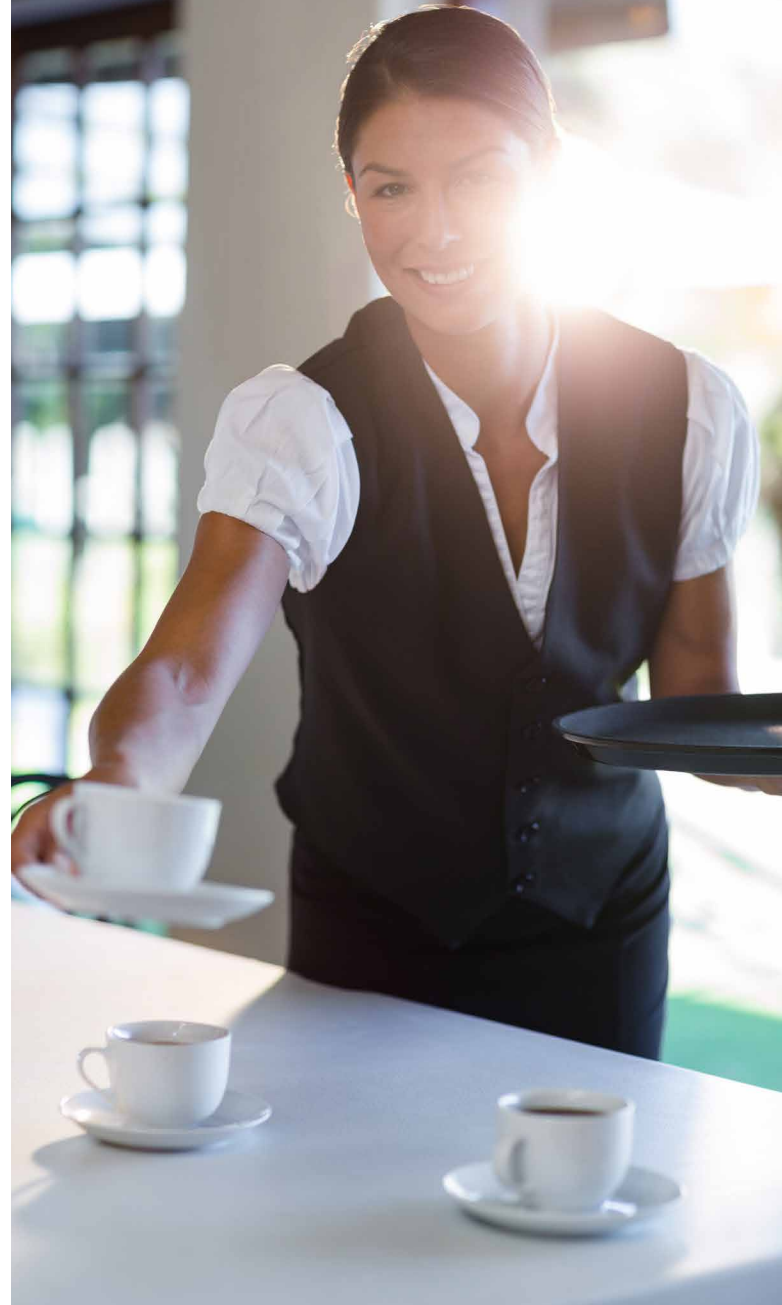
### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- Richmond Region hospitality and tourism partners are encouraged to actively engage in the citizen engagement strategy and programs such as Visit Me in RVA.



## Workforce Development

To capitalize on significant growth in the tourism industry, the Richmond Region requires a skilled workforce ready to meet industry needs and provide Richmond Region residents with the jobs of the future. The Richmond Region requires a workforce development strategy aimed at attracting tomorrow's talent to the industry, improving employee retention and exploring ways to use emerging tech to empower smarter workforces.





## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

ChamberRVA

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

Local colleges and universities that offer hospitality and culinary programs, Regional Government Agencies, Richmond Region Tourism

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism will collect, review and consider information and case studies from other destinations around the country and further afield to determine best practices. Case studies include Asheville, NC, Queensland, Australia, Ontario, Canada and Alberta, Canada.
- Richmond Region Tourism will advocate for the inclusion of Hospitality & Tourism in regional workforce development strategies.
- Richmond Region Tourism will create and host a career opportunities page on its website to showcase and promote Travel & Tourism jobs in the region.

### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- ChamberRVA is encouraged to develop a tourism workforce development strategy for the Richmond Region. Objectives of the strategy should include:
  - Building the tourism industry profile and attractiveness;
  - Building a sustainable labor pool;
  - Building the curriculum and skill sets necessary to meet industry demands;
  - Building the industry collaboration necessary to address local issues and develop innovative solutions.
- Municipal governments and regional agencies are encouraged to assist with any and all public sector information, data, research experience and expertise available to deliver a successful initiative.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- Richmond Region hospitality and tourism leaders are encouraged to communicate the value of industry career paths and opportunities to improve the perception of hospitality and tourism jobs.
- The hospitality and tourism industries will actively participate in the Workforce Development Working Group to contribute insight, experience and expertise to the initiative.



## Tourism Investment

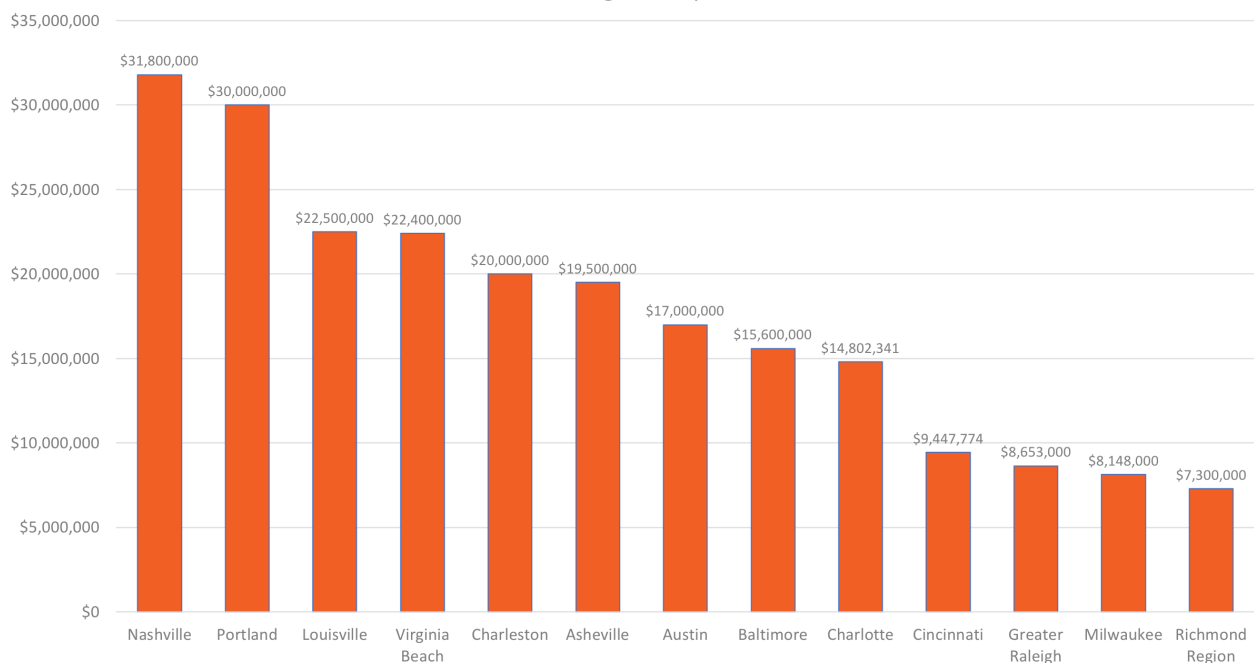
Tourism is one of the Richmond Region's most vital engines for economic growth, contributing \$2.6 billion to the local economy and creating more than 24,000 jobs in the Richmond Region. However, when compared to peer cities and regions, the Richmond Region lacks the investment in destination promotion and tourism to remain competitive.

In today's globalized, networked world, our region must compete with every other community for our share of the world's consumers, tourists, businesses, investment, capital, respect and attention. If we do not promote our region and invite visitors to come experience all that we have to offer, we will be left behind.

When compared to peer cities and regions, Richmond Region Tourism lacks the funding to remain competitive.

Tourism enhances the perception of the Richmond region, which is critical to our regional prosperity. It is the front door to economic development. We cannot afford to lose the benefits of our region's thriving visitor economy. We therefore must prioritize investment in tourism and the visitor economy moving forward.

DMO Budget Comparison





## RECOMMENDED ROLES & STRATEGIES

### **Suggested Lead:**

Richmond Region Tourism

### **Additional Suggested Partners:**

Capital Region Collaborative, ChamberRVA, Chesterfield County, City of Richmond, Greater Richmond Convention Center Authority, Hanover County, Henrico County, New Kent County, Powhatan County, Town of Ashland, Venture Richmond, Community Foundation

### **Richmond Region Tourism:**

- Richmond Region Tourism will organize a Capital Investment Working Group with the objective of launching a capital campaign seeking private investment to position the region as a desirable place to live, work and visit, and capitalize on economic gains in the tourism industries. In the short term, funds will be utilized to augment Richmond Region Tourism's budget to reach a competitive level. In the long term, increased transient lodging tax allocation will fund the gap, and capital campaign funds will be utilized to invest in programs and opportunities addressed in this plan.
- Richmond Region Tourism will monitor Tourism Improvement District (TID) legislation in the Commonwealth of Virginia and explore the formation of a TID should the opportunity arise.

### **Local Government / Community Leaders:**

- The Richmond Region's county and municipal governments are encouraged to increase the allocation of transient lodging tax to Richmond Region Tourism from 1.75% to 2.00%. This allocation should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure investment levels are appropriate to implement the strategies recommended in this plan.

### **Hospitality & Tourism Industry:**

- Richmond Region hospitality and tourism leaders are encouraged to communicate the value of tourism to the region and support an increased allocation of the transient lodging tax to Richmond Region Tourism.

# STATE ALIGNMENT

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# STATE ALIGNMENT

Richmond Region 2030 aligns with the DRIVE Tourism framework, the current Statewide Tourism Plan developed by the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC). The DRIVE Tourism framework serves as a blueprint for the segments of the tourism industry Virginia should focus on to succeed in an over-competitive market.

The plan identifies Visitor Experience, Connectivity, and Authenticity as the three key tenets of Virginia's tourism industry, as well as five competitive factors for economic development focused on products, pillars (supporting elements), partnerships, promotions, and policies.

The five primary areas of product focus identified for Central Virginia were:

## 1. HISTORY & HERITAGE

History and heritage experiences are preserved, refreshed, and expanded;

## 2. TOWN/CITY CENTERS

Visitor experiences in town/city centers are improved to create attractive destinations;

## 3. CULINARY (DINING, WINERIES)

Culinary visitor experiences (wineries, dining, etc.) are established and expanded;

## 4. NATURE & OUTDOOR RECREATION

Visitor experiences are further developed which highlight Virginia's natural beauty and natural assets;

## 5. ARTS & MUSIC

Visitor experiences related to music and arts (performance, visual, craft, etc.) are created and enriched.



The plan also identified five supplementary areas of product focus for Central Virginia:

## 1. MEETINGS

Facilities to attract meetings (conventions, conferences, corporate meetings, trade shows, exhibitions, trainings/seminars, etc.) are built and improved to maximize economic impact and community value;

## 2. SPORTS

Facilities for participant and spectator sporting events are enhanced and developed;

## 3. CULINARY (AGRI-TOURISM)

Culinary visitor experiences (wineries, dining, etc.) are established and expanded;

## 4. INDUSTRY

Other visitor experiences, which leverage Virginia's economic strengths and specialized industries are enhanced and created;

## 5. COMMERCIAL ATTRACTIONS

Commercial attractions are increased.

VTC is currently updating the Statewide Tourism Plan. The new "Drive 2.0" will build on the existing findings and conclusions from the 2013 Statewide Tourism Plan. To ensure alignment with the new plan, VTC participated in the Stakeholder Engagement process.

# IMPLEMENTATION

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# IMPLEMENTATION

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The individual strategies included in this Tourism Master Plan should provide key input into Richmond Region Tourism's strategic and business planning processes, the investing jurisdiction's strategies, planning and management processes, as well as guide the industry and its stakeholders in their individual and collective development and management efforts.

In many cases, the action items included in this report can be undertaken by Richmond Region Tourism, while others need to be shared with stakeholder partners of counties, city and neighboring community agencies and organizations who need to understand how their engagement and cooperation can serve to enhance the Richmond Region as a destination, increase the region's economic development opportunities and enhance the quality of life for residents. Sharing this report and its action items with the region's public and private sector tourism stakeholders and opening the lines of communication and discussion will be the first step in this process.

Of course, Richmond Region Tourism will play a disproportionate role in working to implement, direct and manage the action items that have been articulated in this report, but as the leading tourism organization, which is evolving into a destination marketing and management organization, it has a major responsibility to do just that.

In moving this process forward, it is envisioned that implementation will include, but is not limited to:

- Presentation and communication of the Tourism Master Plan by Richmond Region Tourism to local government officials and industry stakeholders
- Engagement with specific stakeholders to discuss and share individual Action Items
- Agreement with specific stakeholders to work cooperatively to implement Action Items
- Articulation and agreement of cooperative stakeholder implementation initiatives
  - Inclusion of the Tourism Master Plan Action Items into Richmond Region Tourism's strategic and business planning processes
  - Identification of organizational responsibilities and authorities
  - Identification of activities and work plans for implementation
  - Identification of resources necessary for implementation (financial, human resource, organizational)
  - Identification of timetable for implementation
  - Identification of Key Performance Indices (KPIs) necessary to monitor and assess performance
  - Direction, management and monitoring of implementation initiatives

To coordinate this effort, Richmond Region Tourism will establish and facilitate a Tourism Master Plan implementation committee to manage, direct and organize action plans; assign roles and responsibilities; allocate resources; monitor and review efforts; assess KPIs; and adjust the action plans accordingly. The committee will be chaired by Richmond Region Tourism and

will include Richmond Region Tourism board members and management, key Counties, City and neighborhood officials and leading industry stakeholders.

The table below provides an indication as to the timeline of each recommended action.

KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE
<b>CULTURAL TOURISM</b>	Collect, review and consider information and case studies from other destinations to determine best practices in developing and promoting cultural tourism	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Create and host a Cultural Tourism Working Group with the goal of developing a Cultural Tourism Plan for the Richmond Region	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Identify cultural experiences, attractions and events across the region and collaborate on ways to reimagine what already exists and develop new cultural experiences	Long (5+ Years)
	Connect the region's culture to a place branding strategy	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Integrate elements of the cultural tourism plan into RRT's "I Am Tourism" Ambassador Program	Mid (3-5 Years)
<b>ADVENTURE TOURISM</b>	Conduct an outdoor experience audit in the Richmond Region with the goal of determining activities, experiences, organizational and community-wide opportunities, as well as gaps that may limit growth	Short (1-2 Years)
	Connect the region's outdoors activities to a place branding strategy	Short (1-2 Years)
	Advocate for better visitor access to the James River Park and other regional park systems, as well as experiences and amenities within these outdoor spaces that benefit visitors and residents of the region	Short (1-2 Years)



KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE
<b>ADVENTURE TOURISM (CONTINUED)</b>	Work with the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) to host an AdventureConnect meeting in the region to bring together local adventure tour operators and organizations	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Invest in the preservation and sustainability of the region's natural environment	Long (5+ Years)
	Explore, consider, develop and launch new outdoor activities, experiences, events and festivals that increase the opportunities for residents and visitors to connect with the region's natural environment	Long (5+ Years)
	Develop and enhance accommodations related to outdoor experiences, such as camping	Long (5+ Years)
	Implement the Richmond Riverfront Plan to better connect visitors and residents with the James River	Short (1-2 Years)
<b>SPORTS TOURISM</b>	Commission a region-wide facility master plan, pulling together existing county and city plans to identify areas of need, costs, and potential impacts. This master plan would serve as a launching pad to enhance the area's existing venues and to potentially develop new facilities that can positively impact tourism in the area	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Create a Community-Based Sports Advisory Group to organize collective efforts and uncover event bid opportunities	Short (1-2 Years)
	Formalize RRT incentive program to evaluate opportunities and allocate resources efficiently	Short (1-2 Years)
	Invest in sports facility enhancement and development throughout the region	Short (1-2 Years)
<b>HEADQUARTERS HOTEL</b>	Advocate for the development of a headquarters hotel with direct access to the Greater Richmond Convention Center to make the facility potentially viable for larger meetings and conventions	Short (1-2 Years)

KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE
<b>HEADQUARTERS HOTEL</b> (CONTINUED)	If needed, commission a Headquarters Hotel Feasibility and Impact Analysis to examine the market, the position of the hotel, a detailed projection of its operation and performance, the scale/positioning of the product and the economic business case for investment	Short (1-2 Years)
<b>JAMES RIVER</b>	Implement the James River 10-year Park Master Plan ensuring the visitor perspective is considered and alignment occurs with the recommendations of the Tourism Master Plan	Long (5+ Years)
	Develop and promote materials to educate visitors on how to responsibly experience the James River Park system to help foster a culture of stewardship among park users	Long (5+ Years)
	Invest in park-related and regional trail projects	Long (5+ Years)
	Include access points to the James River Parks system are included in regional wayfinding efforts	Long (5+ Years)
<b>CONNECTIVITY &amp; MOBILITY</b>	Advocate for a Visitor Transportation Strategy for the Richmond Region which integrates city and county transportation strategies	Long (5+ Years)
	Conduct visitor flow research to assess true demand impact from out of town visitors to be used in future transportation policy considerations as well as local campaigns	Long (5+ Years)
	Promote, communicate and demonstrate to visitors the ease of car-free visits to the Richmond Region	Long (5+ Years)
	Work with the suggested partners to increase air service opportunities for Richmond Region residents and visitors	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Adopt the City of Richmond's wayfinding design regionally to create a more cohesive regional experience and incorporate regional branding	Short (1-2 Years)



KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE
<b>PLACEMAKING</b>	Explore tactical placemaking opportunities to foster community pride and showcase the region	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Develop and promote materials to educate visitors on how to responsibly experience the James River Park system to help foster a culture of stewardship among park users	Mid (3-5 Years)
<b>MEETINGS &amp; CONVENTIONS</b>	Develop a knowledge-based, business event development strategy to spotlight the region's chief economic drivers and the intellectual capital that organizers want to leverage for their meetings and conferences	Short (1-2 Years)
	Expand and enhance the RVA Champions program to become an official network of Richmond Region professionals who are experts in their respective fields and who will work with Richmond Region Tourism to bring meetings and conventions to the region	Short (1-2 Years)
	Partner with economic development agencies to produce sales and marketing materials highlighting the region's expertise in key economic sectors and supplementary information on specific organizations and individuals active in those industry verticals	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Utilize industry standards and tools to develop a unified system to effectively measure and communicate the impact of meetings and events	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Update the Greater Richmond Convention Center infrastructure, systems, operations and experience to meet the evolving needs of meeting planners and enhance the facility's sense of place	Mid (3-5 Years)
<b>DIVERSITY &amp; INCLUSION</b>	Share the unvarnished historical narrative about people of color in the Richmond Region to build a more inclusive narrative—and demonstrate how far we've come	Short (1-2 Years)

KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE
<b>DIVERSITY &amp; INCLUSION</b> (CONTINUED)	Create and host a Diversity Working Group to assist in creating a strategy for recognizing and removing systemic barriers, access and opportunity, and promoting equity and inclusion in the region's travel and tourism industry	Short (1-2 Years)
	Advocate for and promote temporary and permanent placemaking activities and events which showcase the area's diverse heritage and culture	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Prioritize diversity and inclusion in the makeup of RRT Board of Directors, Committees and Working Groups	Short (1-2 Years)
	Build off OutRVA and BLK RVA campaigns to connect the region's diversity to a place branding strategy	Short (1-2 Years)
	Engage with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities to develop a plan to address diversity issues and embrace inclusion in the hospitality and tourism industry	Long (5+ Years)
<b>RESIDENT PERCEPTION</b>	Develop a citizen engagement strategy to activate locals and help reshape the perception of the region	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Launch a Visit Me in RVA campaign, encouraging residents to invite friends and family to visit the Richmond Region during an activated weekend	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Utilize placemaking strategies to create Instagrammable moments throughout the region	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Expand the awareness of and participation in its I Am Ambassador Campaign by transforming the Ambassador Academy into an online learning program	Long (5+ Years)
	Engage entrepreneurs, inventors, makers, and civic-minded enterprises and foundations to connect the local voices of progress and share stories of inspiration	Short (1-2 Years)
	Support programming and placemaking opportunities which foster local community pride and direct attention and energy to neglected public spaces	Mid (3-5 Years)



KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE
<b>WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</b>	Collect, review and consider information and case studies from other destinations to determine best practices	Long (5+ Years)
	Advocate for the commission of a job-market analysis to identify the hospitality industry's distinctive attributes and supply-and-demand dynamics, as well as the current state of the workforce	Long (5+ Years)
	Create and host a Workforce Development Working Group to develop a workforce development strategy for the Richmond Region	Long (5+ Years)
	Create and host a career opportunities page on its website to showcase and promote Travel & Tourism jobs in the region	Long (5+ Years)
<b>TOURISM INVESTMENT</b>	Increase the allocation of transient lodging tax to Richmond Region Tourism from 1.75% to 2.00%	Short (1-2 Years)
	Organize a Capital Investment Working Group with the objective of launching a capital campaign	Mid (3-5 Years)
	Monitor Tourism Improvement District (TID) legislation in the Commonwealth of Virginia and explore the formation of a TID should the opportunity arise	Mid (3-5 Years)



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