

## Greater Richmond Convention Center Celebrates 20 Years

**RICHMOND, Va. (Jan. 23, 2023)** – Virginia’s largest meeting and exhibition venue celebrates two decades of welcoming events and visitors to the Richmond Region this year. The Greater Richmond Convention Center officially opened on February 28, 2003 as cheerleaders from across the country flipped in the American National Cheer and Dance Championships in the building’s exhibit hall.

Since then, the GRCC has hosted a total of 7,034 conventions, consumer shows, sports tournaments and other events bringing millions of people and dollars to the region.

The GRCC replaced the 62,000-square-foot Richmond Center, which opened in 1986. Stretching across a six-block area, the 700,000 square-foot GRCC incorporates some of the steel and pillars from the original facility.

Construction for the project began in 1999 and was supported by a \$10 million investment from former Governor George Allen and the regionwide transient lodging tax.

"It is the best example of regional cooperation in the history of this whole area," said late Lt. Gov. John H. Hager during a 2002 press conference.

The Greater Richmond Convention Center Authority – a political subdivision of Virginia with representation from the city of Richmond, Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico counties – oversaw the financing, development and construction of the GRCC. The Authority’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary is this year.

We’re immensely proud of the legacy and the positive impact the Greater Richmond Convention Center has had on tourism,” said Lincoln Saunders, City of Richmond Chief Administrative Officer and Chair of the Greater Richmond Convention Center Authority. “Millions of people are introduced to the Richmond Region through events and competitions that are hosted at the facility every year. These visitors support our economy by shopping at our small businesses, eating at restaurants and visiting attractions.”

To examine the viability of the GRCC, regional leaders commissioned a feasibility study by C.H. Johnson Consulting in 1999. The researchers projected hotel tax collections to reach \$30 million by fiscal year 2020. Hotel tax collection revenues reached \$30 million by fiscal year 2019.

Throughout the GRCC expansion phases, groups were welcomed to the region to use completed portions of the building. About 1,200 women from the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority were the first to use the facility’s new ballroom during a three-day conference in May 2001.

When the GRCC was officially completed in 2003, Richmond Region Tourism had booked 18 conventions through 2008.

Interest and bookings have experienced a dramatic uptick over the years. During its last fiscal year, the GRCC hosted over 180 events.

From USA Fencing tournaments and ice dancing competitions to offshore wind conferences and comic conventions, the GRCC has hosted a variety of large-scale events since it opened.

“The convention center is a shining example of regional collaboration,” said Jack Berry, president and CEO of Richmond Region Tourism. “The success of the convention center demonstrates how investing in tourism results in positive economic development for our entire region. Richmond Region Tourism and its partners are committed to working alongside our community to continue tourism’s positive momentum.”

The GRCC went through extensive upgrades to modernize the facility during 2020.

GRCC’s technological and cosmetic improvements include new LED lighting and LED RGB color lighting, new monitors, new digital signage, and a new digital sound system. Its interior spaces were updated with new tile, accents, and paint scheme, in addition to new pub-style tables and seating. The facility also features a new executive lounge and a renovated food court and service desk.

Today the GRCC features 178,159 square feet of contiguous exhibit space, a 30,550 square foot grand ballroom and 50,000 sq. ft. of additional meeting room space.

For more information, visit [www.richmondcenter.com](http://www.richmondcenter.com).

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### **About Greater Richmond Convention Center**

The Greater Richmond Convention Center is the largest meeting and exhibition facility in the Commonwealth of Virginia with 178,159 sq. ft. of contiguous exhibit space, a 30,550 sq. ft. Grand Ballroom and 50,000 sq. ft. of additional meeting room space. The convention center was built as a result of regional cooperation between the City of Richmond and the surrounding counties of Henrico, Chesterfield and Hanover by their participation in the incorporation of the Greater Richmond Convention Center Authority.

### **About Greater Richmond Convention Center Authority (GRCCA)**

GRCCA, a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia, was created by the local governmental jurisdictions of Richmond, Henrico, Chesterfield and Hanover to acquire, finance, expand, renovate, construct, lease, operate and maintain the GRCC. GRCCA is governed by a five-member commission made up of the chief administrative officer of each of the four incorporating political subdivisions and the president of InUnison. Visit [richmondcenter.com](http://richmondcenter.com) for more information.

**About Richmond Region Tourism**

Richmond Region Tourism is a private, not-for-profit dedicated to promoting the Region to meeting, convention and sports event planners, tour operators and leisure travelers. The organization represents the cities of Richmond and Colonial Heights, the town of Ashland and four counties: Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico and New Kent. Richmond Region Tourism operates Visitor Centers at the Robinson House at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Richmond International Airport.

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