

2024 Annual Report

Engaging Businesses and Community Leaders
to Enhance the Vitality of Downtown



LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Downtown Richmond Partner,

Over the last few years, Venture Richmond has worked to step up its support of Downtown neighborhoods and businesses in an effort to further enhance the vitality of the community.

First, we responded to property owners in Manchester who requested an expansion of the Service District to extend enhanced services like marketing, events, advocacy, beautification, and Clean and Safe to Downtown's south side of the river.

Next, as part of our decades-long Clean and Safe program, we hired a community outreach coordinator to assist unhoused individuals in Downtown. Leon Dangerfield has quickly become a valuable partner for downtown businesses and in his primary role, he helps guide those challenged with homelessness to essential services.

Finally, after decades of managing Brown's Island for the City of Richmond, Venture Richmond is in the early phase of a capital campaign to improve the experience on this small

downtown oasis, which sits at the northernmost end of the T. Tyler Potterfield Bridge, and hosts about a million visits annually. While many Richmonders know Brown's Island as a location for live events and festivals, like Friday Cheers, Dominion Energy Riverrock, and the Richmond Folk Festival, among others, it has long lacked the simplest amenities in most city parks – like restrooms and water fountains.

The improvement project aims to align the Island with the many projects recommended in the City's Riverfront Master Plan, vetted and approved in 2012. One goal is to get visitors closer to the water on the Canal side of the Island and the James River side, while also widening the entrance to the Potterfield Bridge, providing more shade throughout, making all entrances ADA accessible, and so much more! Funding for the \$30 million project is a joint venture between the City and Venture Richmond, with Venture Richmond leading fundraising efforts with the private sector.



CoStar Group's \$460 million expansion of its Global Research Headquarters features four restaurants on Tredegar Street across from Brown's Island, all opening in Spring 2026. Combined with the Allianz Amphitheater at Riverfront, opening this June, and Brown's Island improvements, the Riverfront area along Tredegar Street will soon be Richmond's newest vibrant Downtown neighborhood!

As we watch the tremendous progress of VPM's new statewide headquarters on Broad Street and VCU's CoStar Center for Arts and Innovation at the corner of Belvidere and Broad, it's clear that we are also on the cusp of a newly-revitalized Broad Street corridor. Nothing illustrates confidence in a community more than investment, and the five projects I've noted comprise \$820 million, all of which will come to fruition within the next three years.

There are so many exciting developments, bringing thousands of new people to our Downtown each year. Venture Richmond will continue to do our part to make the Downtown experience the best it can be!

Lisa Sims,
President & CEO, Venture Richmond



EVENTS

A key driver of Downtown visitation is a multitude of festivals and events, and four of the largest are produced by Venture Richmond Events, LLC.



- **21,000** attendees
- **42** local musicians
- **17.4M** total media impressions
- **334** news story mentions with **394.5M** in total readership

2024 Awards

- Richmond Magazine's Best Concert Series (1st place)
- Style Weekly's Best Concert Series



2024 was the **20th anniversary year** of the Richmond Folk Festival. VPM, working in partnership with Venture Richmond, produced a 1-hour television documentary, *The Sounds of Culture*, behind the scenes of one of Virginia's largest and most cherished events.

- **200,000** attendees
- **77** local musicians
- **900** volunteers
- **9** performances with **7** artists at Richmond Public Schools

2024 Awards

- Richmond Magazine's Best Music Festival (1st place)
- Virginia Living Magazine's Best Festival (1st place)
- Richmond Times-Dispatch's Best Festival (3rd place)
- Style Weekly's Best Outdoor Festival



- **30,000** attendees
- **111** local musicians
- **60M** total media impressions
- **158** news story mentions with **463.6M** in total readership



- **75,000** attendees
- **1,922** athletes
- **17** athletic events
- **29** local musicians

2024 Awards

- Richmond Magazine's Best Non-music Festival or Event in the City (3rd place)
- Virginia Living's Best Festival (3rd place)

MARKETING

Venture Richmond is the only organization in the City whose marketing efforts are focused solely on Downtown and its businesses.

Social Media

Venture Richmond's four social media accounts totaled **13.8M impressions** (not including event and riverfront accounts), a **172% increase** over 2023.

	Total followers	% change from 2023	Total impressions	% change from 2023
Instagram 250+ downtown businesses featured	38.3K	+41%	4M	+21%
Facebook	19.4K	+27%	9.4M	+490%*
X (formerly Twitter)	32.6K	-1%	161K	-20%
LinkedIn	4.7K	+42%	282K	+39%

* paid ad campaign June - December

Advertising Campaigns

PAID MEDIA

Virtual tour of downtown

February 1-April 15 and September 5-November 1

- Total impressions: **4.2M**

Website content on Facebook

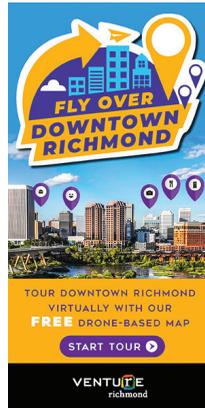
June 26-September 30

- Total impressions: **6.4M**

Downtown RVA holidays

November 26 - December 27

- Total impressions: **1M**



OWNED MEDIA

Social media giveaway

June 5-July 4

- Total gift cards purchased from downtown small businesses: **17**
- Total amount of gift cards: **\$1,773**
- Total impressions: **15K**

Holiday blog content on social media

November 11-December 31

- Total gift cards purchased from downtown small businesses: **30**
- Total amount of gift cards: **\$2,860**
- Total impressions: **900K**



Venture Richmond Website

Total pageviews **1M** +5%

Total sessions **762K** +9.6%

Total users **582K** +12.6%

Blog/news sessions **246K** +20%

● % increase over 2023

Earned Media

372M in total readership as a result of **633** news stories

Enewsletters

35 newsletters sent with **96K** opens and a **29.4%** open rate (not including event and riverfront accounts)

DOWNTOWN PLACEMAKING

Whether it's wayfinding or beautification, Venture Richmond has a hand in placemaking efforts to improve the quality of life in Downtown's Service Districts.



Canal Walk and Riverfront Placemaking

- **29** news story mentions about the Canal Walk garnering **9.1M** in total readership
- **8** Kwanzan Cherry trees and a River Birch tree were planted on Brown's Island
- **240** new plants added to the Canal Walk, including autumn shrubs and winter botanical enhancements
- Coordinated with the City of Richmond on the Canal Walk Improvement Project, Phase II, reconfiguring a ramp making the Canal Walk more accessible
- Replanted Bayscapes, an area of all native plant species near Brown's Island
- **2** new 8'x20' vinyl banners installed on the Floodwall inviting Capital Trail and Canal Walk users to explore the riverfront
- **20** community non-profits, small businesses and City agencies met quarterly as the Riverfront Stakeholders Group to discuss important issues along Downtown's riverfront

Downtown Placemaking

- **270** planters and hanging baskets downtown
- **83** blocks beautified downtown
- **4,000** seasonal plants installed in spring and fall along Broad, Grace, 3rd and 5th Streets including near the I-95 entry points

Manchester Placemaking

- Developed a three-year neighborhood marketing campaign with Fable, a Manchester based firm, that will launch in 2025
- Worked with James River Park System to fund the removal and management of invasive plants and trees along the riverfront's trails and climbing wall (phase 1 of a 2 year plan)
- Worked with the Manchester Task Force to develop neighborhood placemaking priorities

RIVERFRONT CANAL CRUISES

Venture Richmond owns and operates five authentic canal boats and a marina, and during the season (April-November), our canal cruises enhance Downtown's tourism appeal.



31K historic tour passengers

8.2K private charter passengers

2K Erie Canal Cruise, Halloween event passengers

4M total media impressions for the season

14 newsletters sent with **54K** opens and a **34.6%** open rate

59 news story mentions with **20M** in total readership

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT & DOWNTOWN ENHANCED SERVICES

Venture Richmond provides enhanced property management services for business improvement districts comprising Downtown, the northern Riverfront and Manchester.

Clean & Safe

- **745,380** gallons of litter, **248,880** cubic yards of leaves and tons of weeds removed from nearly **770** blocks throughout the business improvement districts comprising Downtown, the northern riverfront and Manchester
- **31,156** block faces cleaned both north and south of the river

Clean & Safe - Manchester (South of River)

- **45** hours of power washing sidewalks
- **150** tree wells mulched



Riverfront Maintenance and Visitation

- **85,500** lbs of litter, trash, and debris removed from the Canal Walk and Brown's Island
- **24,000** pet waste bags distributed to riverfront dog walkers
- **1,800** new shrubs, flowers, and trees along the Canal Walk and nearby street medians
- **2M** people visited Downtown's Canal Walk and surrounding area James River Park Systems trails
- **445,000** crossings of the T. Tyler Potterfield Memorial Bridge as people made their way to and from Brown's Island



Clean & Safe - Downtown (North of the River)

- **3,400** block faces cleaned
- **3,600** block faces of weed abatement
- **31,000** hours of sidewalk cleaning
- **56** blocks of sidewalks power washed Downtown along E. Broad and E. Main Streets over **500** hours
- **2,300** hours spent removing graffiti
- **278** graffiti/handbills removed
- **300,000** sq ft of graffiti tags (oversized) removed



Social Outreach

As an extension of the Clean & Safe program, a NEW position, Social Services Outreach Specialist, was implemented in July 2024. Data below was gathered July-December.

- **57** documented individuals sleeping
- **31** individuals exhibiting passive panhandling
- **9** incidents of individuals exhibiting public intoxication
- **122** wellness checks of unsheltered patrons
- **14** individuals were offered service referrals or addiction treatment contacts
- **15** individuals were offered medical referrals
- **91** individuals referred to shelters (both nightly and seasonal/increment weather)
- **8** individuals referred for food resources
- **5** individuals referred to counseling services
- **102** business checks
- **5** medical/EMS calls to support unsheltered individuals
- **3** individuals referred to employment opportunities

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