

2025 Annual Report

ENGAGING BUSINESSES

AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

TO ENHANCE THE VITALITY

OF DOWNTOWN



Dominion
Energy
riverrock
RIVERROCKRVA.COM

VENTURE richmond Annual Report

LETTER FROM THE CEO

As we reflect on the past year in Downtown Richmond, I'm struck by a renewed sense of energy—and of connection.

Throughout 2025, Downtown continued to re-emerge as a place where people gather, celebrate, and invest in the future. From longtime residents and small business owners to first-time visitors experiencing the riverfront, we see more people choosing Downtown Richmond every day.

At the heart of that momentum are the moments that bring us together. Last year, events like the 2nd Street Festival, Dominion Energy Riverrock, Friday Cheers, the Richmond Folk Festival, and a growing calendar of community programming once again filled our streets and public spaces with life. These experiences are more than events—they are reminders of what makes Downtown special: shared experiences, cultural pride, and a strong sense of place.

We are also making meaningful investments in the spaces that define Downtown. The Brown's Island Improvement Plan—a \$30 million investment in one of our

community's most beloved riverfront destinations—will ensure this space continues to serve generations to come. It joins other transformative projects along the riverfront, including the new Allianz Amphitheater and CoStar's half-billion-dollar expansion, all of which are strengthening Richmond's identity as a place where nature, culture, and community intersect.

That same sense of momentum is shaping the future of our urban core and surrounding neighborhoods. Along the Broad Street corridor, Virginia Public Media's new statewide headquarters will soon open its doors, while VCU's CoStar Center for Arts and Innovation is rapidly taking shape as a major new anchor. In the City Center, the City of Richmond continues to make strides toward a new convention headquarters hotel, an important step in strengthening Downtown's role as a destination for meetings, tourism, and economic activity. Our work in Manchester has been especially energizing as we collaborate with the community to support its continued growth and evolving identity. Together, these efforts reflect a growing confidence

in Downtown Richmond—not only as a destination, but as a center for creativity, innovation, and opportunity.

None of this work happens in isolation. It is made possible by the partnerships that define our community—our public-sector partners, private investors, small businesses, volunteers, and advocates who deeply believe in the future of Downtown Richmond. Your support and collaboration are what move this work forward.

As we look ahead, we do so with both optimism and purpose. There is more to do, and we are committed to building on this momentum—continuing to activate our spaces, support our businesses, and invest in a Downtown that serves everyone.

Downtown Richmond is not just growing; it is becoming more connected, more vibrant, and more reflective of the people who call it home.

We are proud to help shape a Downtown that reflects the very best of Richmond—and its future.

Sincerely,



Lisa Sims,
President & CEO,
Venture Richmond



EVENTS

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



MAY 2, 9, 23, 30,
JUNE 6, 13, 20, 27

19 PERFORMANCE GROUPS

- RICHMOND MAGAZINE'S BEST CONCERT SERIES (1ST PLACE)
- STYLE WEEKLY'S BEST CONCERT SERIES

16.6M total media impressions

15 newsletters sent with **55,000** opens and a **16.5%** open rate

Instagram
19,952 total followers

⬆️ 24% over 2024
1.1M total impressions
⬆️ 61% over 2024

Facebook
14,752 total followers

⬆️ 1% over 2024
239,544 total impressions
⬆️ 49% over 2024



OCT. 31, NOV. 1-2

2595 TICKETS SOLD
⬆️ 24% increase over 2024

Instagram
68,234 total impressions

⬆️ 313% over 2024

Facebook
141,823 total impressions

⬆️ 454% over 2024



CO-PRODUCED WITH SPORTS BACKERS

MAY 16-18

12 PERFORMANCE GROUPS
1,954 ATHLETES
16 ATHLETIC EVENTS

- VIRGINIA LIVING'S BEST FESTIVAL (3RD PLACE)
- STYLE WEEKLY'S BEST OUTDOOR FESTIVAL (3RD PLACE)



OCT. 10-12

40 PERFORMANCE GROUPS
1000 VOLUNTEERS

- RICHMOND MAGAZINE'S BEST MUSIC FESTIVAL (1ST PLACE)
- VIRGINIA LIVING MAGAZINE'S BEST FESTIVAL (1ST PLACE)
- STYLE WEEKLY'S BEST OUTDOOR FESTIVAL
- RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH'S BEST FESTIVAL (3RD PLACE)
- 2025 AWARD OF EXCELLENCE BY THE INTERNATIONAL DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION (IDA) FOR MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS AND EVENTS FOR THE 20TH RICHMOND FOLK FESTIVAL.

48.1M total media impressions

33 newsletters sent with **60,330** opens and a **20%** open rate

Instagram
14,058 total followers

⬆️ 14% over 2024
927,973 total impressions
⬆️ 94% over 2024

Facebook
25,413 total followers

⬆️ 2% over 2024
713,293 total impressions
⬆️ 35% over 2024



OCTOBER 4-5, 2025

OCT. 4-5

28 PERFORMANCE GROUPS

57.3M total media impressions

12 newsletters sent with **16,000** opens and a **21.2%** open rate

Instagram
6,863 total followers

⬆️ 32% over 2024
456,851 total impressions
⬆️ 235% over 2024

Facebook
10,536 total followers

⬆️ 21% over 2024
881,973 total impressions
⬆️ 0.6% over 2024

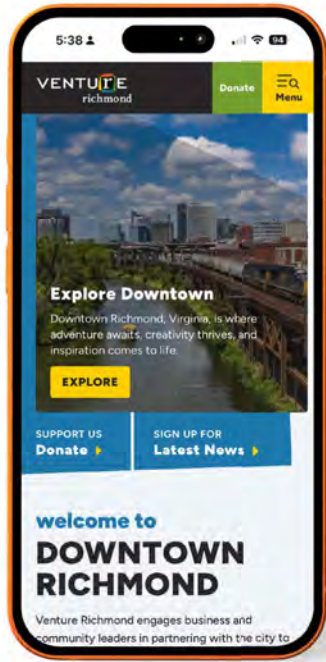


MARKETING

Venture Richmond is the only organization whose sole marketing focus is Downtown and its businesses.

VENTURERICHMOND.COM WEBSITE

Launched a redesigned website with a new CMS and CRM on September 22, 2025.



1.04M total pageviews
⬇️ 8% from 2024

645,147 total sessions
⬇️ 15% from 2024

458,973 total users
⬇️ 21% from 2024

95,554 blog/news sessions
⬇️ 61% from 2024

SOCIAL MEDIA

Venture Richmond's three social media accounts totaled **12.2M** impressions (not including event and riverfront accounts), a 13% decrease from 2024.

Instagram	Facebook	LinkedIn
45,896 total followers ⬆️ 20% over 2024	21,521 total followers ⬆️ 11% over 2024	5,281 total followers ⬆️ 12% over 2024
7.3M total impressions ⬆️ 82% over 2024	4.7M total impressions ⬆️ 49% from 2024	203,504 total impressions ⬆️ 27% from 2024
250+ downtown businesses featured		

ENEWSLETTERS

Venture Richmond's enews account (not including events and riverfront accounts).

42 newsletters sent **21.3%** open rate
78,000 opens

ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

Venture Richmond's paid and owned media totaled **8.8M** impressions, a 29% decrease from 2024.

PAID MEDIA

Influencer IG reels attractions ad campaign
MAY-JULY

243,331 total views, Music Venues

27,795 total views, Museums

Influencer/social media ad campaign
MAY-JULY

8 total partnerships

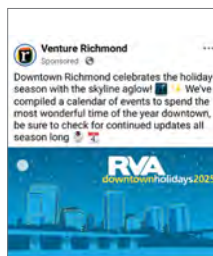
202,425 total impressions

Downtown RVA Holidays ad campaign
NOVEMBER 12 - DECEMBER 21

479,519 total media impressions

Redesigned website launch ad campaign
DECEMBER 8-31

358,973 total media impressions



Manchester neighborhood marketing campaign

MARCH 10 - DECEMBER 31

3.5M display ad impressions

579,479 social media ad impressions

32,592 SEM impressions

4.13M total paid media impressions



OWNED MEDIA

VR social media attractions ad campaign
JUNE-AUGUST

2.1M total paid media impressions

VR social media holidays ad campaign
NOVEMBER 11 - DECEMBER 31

34 total gift cards purchased from downtown small businesses for giveaways

\$3,240 total amount of gift cards

1.3M total impressions

PLACEMAKING

Venture Richmond leads placemaking – from street art to beautification – across Downtown Service Districts.



CANAL WALK AND RIVERFRONT

2,004 new shrubs, flowers, and trees planted along the Canal Walk and nearby street medians as part of the annual beautification of the area.

404 additional new plants added as part of a botanical makeover of the Canal Walk east of Virginia Street, including summer perennials, blossoming trees and shrubs as well as other botanical enhancements.

Removed graffiti and repaired vandalized locations along the Canal Walk.



DOWNTOWN

83 blocks beautified downtown

41 properties cleaned of large tag graffiti

87 block faces of sidewalks power washed

60 planters throughout downtown repainted and graffiti-proofed

220 planters and hanging baskets added

2,900 seasonal plants installed in spring and fall along Broad, Grace, 3rd and 5th Streets including near the I-95 entry points

65 existing street pole banners and brackets maintained



MANCHESTER

3 new murals painted by local artists, working with the Manchester Alliance and Hull Street Merchants Association to coordinate locations and artists.

10 properties cleaned of large tag graffiti from buildings along and facing Hull Street.

66 block faces of sidewalks power washed.

50 existing street pole banners and brackets maintained.

Worked with the Manchester Task Force to hire Marvel, community planners, who conducted a Manchester Analysis and Concepts for the Future report, helping to inform neighborhood placemaking priorities.

Continued work with the Department of Parks Recreation & Community Facilities to fund the removal and management of invasive plants and trees around the riverfront trails and climbing wall.

RIVERFRONT CANAL CRUISES

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



32,036 historic tour passengers
⬆️ 3% over 2024

6,000 private charter passengers
⬆️ 17% from 2024

3.2M total paid media impressions

Instagram

3,398 total followers
⬆️ 56% over 2024

140,420 total impressions
⬆️ 78% over 2024

Facebook

7,858 total followers
⬆️ 27% over 2024

1.12M total impressions
⬆️ 459% over 2024



SERVICES

Venture Richmond provides enhanced property management services for the downtown service districts, including Manchester.



CLEAN & SAFE DOWNTOWN

- 373,680 gallons of litter
- 254,580 gallons of leaves and weeds
- 2,444 block faces treated for weed abatement
- 3,477 small stickers, graffiti, and handbills removed
- 341 cleaned hot spots and problem areas
- 320 bulk items removed/reported

CLEAN & SAFE MANCHESTER

- 321,840 gallons of litter
- 17,700 gallons of leaves and weeds
- 1,212 block faces treated for weed abatement
- 165 tree wells mulched
- 281 small stickers, graffiti, and handbills removed
- 86 cleaned hot spots and problem areas

PUBLIC SAFETY, MANCHESTER

The Manchester Task Force prioritized public safety and worked with the Richmond Police Department to employ 15 off-duty officers for a security detail in the neighborhood. They worked 616 hours with a strong focus along and adjacent to the Hull Street corridor from February to December 2025.

SOCIAL OUTREACH

As an extension of the Clean & Safe program, the Social Services Outreach Specialist has transformed service and support to unhoused individuals, as well as to downtown business owners and stakeholders since its inception in 2024. As such, they hired a part-time assistant role in 2025 to increase and expand support.

- 70 unique interactions with unhoused persons
- 64 referrals to mental health counseling
- 44 referrals for substance use treatment
- 126 referrals to shelter
- 26 referrals to food
- 89 encampment cleanups
- 356 business checks

RIVERFRONT MAINTENANCE AND VISITATION

- 2M visitors of Downtown's Riverfront and adjacent park trails
- 1,600 sq ft of decking and structural supports replaced on the April 1865 Exhibit on Brown's Island
- 656,000 crossings of the T. Tyler Potterfield Memorial Bridge as people made their way to and from Brown's Island
- City's Canal Walk Improvements Project Phase II completed, allowing for better ADA accessibility to the Canal Walk
- 91,000 lbs of litter, trash, and debris removed from the Canal Walk and Brown's Island
- 11 third party rental events brought over
- 26,300 pet waste bags distributed to riverfront dog walkers
- 81,500 visitors to Brown's Island





BROWN'S ISLAND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The Brown's Island Improvement Project is a comprehensive plan to transform every part of the island, creating a world-class riverfront park for all to enjoy. Construction began in late November 2025, and the island is currently closed to the public. It is planned to reopen in time to host the Richmond Folk Festival in 2026.

Brown's Island is less than a quarter of a square mile in size, but to Richmonders and visitors to our region, it occupies a much bigger place in their lives – and hearts. It connects both sides of the river and unites everyone to experience the best of RVA. With new and expanded facilities supporting recreation, celebration, education, culture, and the arts, Brown's Island will truly become the jewel of the James.

WHAT WE'RE ACCOMPLISHING



Enhancement of visitor experience for 1M+ visitors annually



Accessibility for all people, regardless of ability



Critical infrastructure for events and daily recreation



Increased opportunities for education, ecotourism, history, and the arts



Strengthening biodiversity and long-term environmental resilience



Making Brown's Island a dynamic "outdoor living room" for the community



BIG-TIME IMPROVEMENTS

A \$30M transformation of Brown's Island is underway for this city-owned property. The City of Richmond is investing \$15M and Venture Richmond is raising \$15M from the private sector. As of March 2026, Venture Richmond has secured \$11.8M in private commitments and has \$3.2M still to raise. The project includes:

- Adding restrooms and water fountains to both ends of the island
- Making all paths and walkways ADA accessible
- Building an ADA accessible board walk at the CoStar Group 7th Street entrance
- Introducing elements of play with a splash pad water feature
- Opening up views of the James River by removing invasive plantings and replacing them with native plants, while also adding riverfront terraces
- Planting approximately 200 shade trees and adding shade structures
- Expanding and enhancing the planting areas with 11k+ native plants and bringing pollinators back to the Island
- Incorporating stepped pathways to increase access to the Canal side of the Island
- Adding performing arts pavilion providing support areas for artists and crews
- Introducing a plaza space under the Manchester Bridge, which provides constant shade

BELOW: Informational kiosk, made possible by TowneBank, provides a map of the James River Park system.

BELOW: The Lookout (Riverside), made possible by the Community Foundation for a greater Richmond, welcomes guests on the western end of the Island, as well as adding seating, trees, and gardens. The entrance to the Potterfield Bridge is being widened as part of the plan.





ABOVE: Splash pad play feature made possible by Dominion Energy. New shade structures, seating areas, and ADA ramp at the CoStar Group 7th Street entrance.



TOP:
Riverfront terraces for seating and relaxation, which will provide unencumbered views and access to put visitors closer to the river than ever before.

BOTTOM:
The Lookout (canal side) with an expanded dock, terraces, and a restroom.

BROWN'S ISLAND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

RAISED TO DATE: \$15 MILLION FROM THE CITY OF RICHMOND AND \$11.8 MILLION MADE POSSIBLE BY OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

MAJOR DONORS (\$100,000+)

\$5,000,000 AND ABOVE

City of Richmond
CoStar Group

\$1,000,000 – \$4,999,999

Community Foundation for a
greater Richmond
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NewMarket Corporation

\$500,000 – \$999,999

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THANKS TO OUR EARLY CONTRIBUTORS AND THE CITY OF RICHMOND, WE HAVE RAISED 89% OF OUR \$30 MILLION CAMPAIGN GOAL. WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN THESE GENEROUS SUPPORTERS IN HELPING TO TRANSFORM BROWN'S ISLAND INTO A VIBRANT RIVERFRNT PARK FOR OUR COMMUNITY.

The above contributions to the Brown's Island Improvement Project have been made as of April 3, 2026. If we have inadvertently omitted your name, please let us know by contacting Venture Richmond staff at contactus@venturerichmond.com and we will gladly correct the record.

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Venture Richmond Staff



Left to right

*Top row: **Joel Campos-Núñez**, Riverfront Canal Cruises Manager / Riverfront Operations Assistant | **Alexander Dahm**, Operations Manager, Riverfront Canal Cruises | **Stephen Lecky**, Director of Events | **Erika Gay**, Director of Marketing and Communications | **Lucy Meade**, Director of Economic Development and Community Relations | **Lisa Sims**, President & CEO*

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