

2024 Recap & Observations

Tourism Spending Growth:

Visitor spending (according to VTC/Symphony Data) **increased from \$75.1M in 2016 to \$111.3M in 2023**, with significant growth in lodging, food & beverage, and retail sectors.

Aggregated Geographies - Spending and Economic Impact

Essex County, Lancaster County, Middlesex County

Year
2023

Geography
Multiple values



\$153.3M
Visitor Spending
YOY: ▲ 7.3%



12.2% is the share of all area jobs sustained by tourism



Visitors generated **\$8.6M** in state and local taxes

Spending



Employment



Labor Income



State Taxes

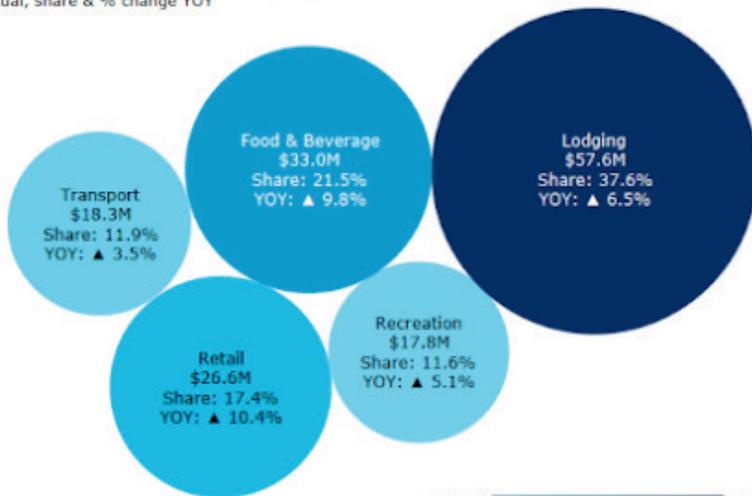


Local Taxes



Visitor Spending by Category in 2023

Actual, share & % change YOY



Visitor Spending

Actual & % change YOY



SYMPHONY TOURISM ECONOMICS

Social Media & Influencer Impact:

Instagram followers **grew by nearly 21% (7,538 total)**, driven in part by **strategic collaborations with influencers** whose audiences primarily engage on the platform.

Continued

Data-Driven Marketing:

Integrated **VTC POI Data and Arrivalist Data** to more effectively target high-value visitor markets and optimize marketing efforts.

Expanding the River Realm:

Welcomed Tappahannock to the Virginia's River Realm brand, fostering regional cross-promotion and encouraging visitors to explore beyond a single destination.

Website Redesign & Enhanced Content:

Revamped the Virginia's River Realm website to **uniquely showcase each town and county while maintaining a cohesive brand identity**, and introduced **new tools for building guides and creating more activity-based content**.

Virginia's River Realm App Launch:

Launched the **new VRR app at the end of 2024, built with Visit Widget**, as a seamless trip-planning tool to enhance visitor experiences. **Total Users (Web & Mobile): 7,382; iOS Downloads: 169; Android Downloads: 39.**

New Programs

Virginia's River Realm Loop

Designed to attract an untapped market of cruising boaters by encouraging them to take a scenic detour up the Rappahannock River, discovering marinas, waterfront dining, and local attractions.

By River / By Road / BY AIR

Building on the success of By River By Road, the program expands to By River By Road By Air, targeting pilots and aircraft owners with a strategic marketing plan to encourage fly-in visits to the River Realm via Hummel Airfield in Topping.

Upcoming Grants

The following **VTC DMO Grants (\$20,000 each)** have been applied for:

PTO/Extended Weekends

Encouraging use of Paid Time Off for extended weekends in VRR

"Where The Wild Things Are"

Highlighting flora and fauna experiences targeting outdoors enthusiasts.

Trail & Tide

Highlighting all of our water-based activities targeting outdoor enthusiasts.

Ongoing Marketing Efforts

Social Media Marketing

Facebook: 15,000 Followers

Instagram: 7,538 Followers

Frequency: 5-7 Posts Per Week

Influencers Contracted: 8

Email Marketing

Subscribers: 25,607

Email Campaigns: 30

Total Sends: 598,759

Website

Average Monthly Visitors

Shoulder Season: 1.1K Visitors

Busy Season: 4.2K Visitors

Virginia's RIVER REALM

Annual Marketing Plan

January - February

Restaurant Week & #EatLikeALocal

Objective: to position the area as a top culinary destination by increasing awareness of the many dining opportunities, as well as supporting local restaurateurs in the shoulder months.

Target Audience: Hyper-Local (within 25 mile radius); Richmond, DC and Hampton Roads

May - August

Tide & Trail Adventures

Objective: Position the River Realm as a premier destination for on-the-water adventures—boating, kayaking, and more—highlighting its scenic waterways and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Target Audience: Outdoor enthusiasts in DC and Raleigh, NC.

Touch Down & Take Off

Objective: Showcase the River Realm as a family-friendly fly-in destination by promoting Hummel Airfield and tailored experiences for pilots and aircraft owners.

Target Audience: Aircraft owners and pilots in Maryland and Western Virginia.

PTO/Extended Family Fun

Objective: Encourage young professional families to take advantage of paid time off and school breaks by experiencing affordable, engaging family fun in the River Realm.

Target Audience: Families in DC and Maryland.

Mid-November - December

Small Towns, Big Holiday Fun

Objective: to promote the holiday charm and spirit of VRR's small towns during the holiday season, driving visitor engagement and boosting local businesses.

Marketing Channels

Target Audience

- Influencer Marketing
- Paid Advertising
- Organic Social Media
- Partner Promotions
- Email Marketing

- Families with young children
- Designated Market Areas

March - April

Family Spring Break

Objective: To attract families looking for unique and enriching experiences during spring break by showcasing the diverse attractions and activities available in VRR.

Target Audience: Families with young children in DC, RVA and Hampton Roads

Virginia's River Realm Loop

Objective: Capture cruising boaters making their way along the Chesapeake Bay, enticing them to extend their journey with a scenic and enriching side trip into the River Realm.

Target Audience: Boaters within the Chesapeake Bay cruising region.

Where The Wild Things Are

Objective: Invite outdoor enthusiasts to explore the unique flora and fauna of the River Realm, experiencing nature in its most untamed form.

Target Audience: Nature lovers and adventurers in DC and Raleigh, NC.

September - Mid-November

Foodies & Festivals

Objective: Drive attendance at food-forward festivals and boost interest in culinary experiences, attracting visitors to VRR during the fall season.

Marketing Channels

Target Audience

- Influencer Marketing
- Paid Advertising
- Organic Social Media
- Print Media & Press
- Email Marketing

- Men & Women, Age 30-65
- Interest in culinary experiences & festival events.
- Designated Market Areas

Shoptober

Objective: to increase foot traffic at local retail businesses during the month of October.

Marketing Channels

Target Audience

- Paid Advertising
- Organic Social Media
- Print Media & Press
- Email Marketing

- Women, Age 30-65
- Designated Market Areas
- Hyper-local: within 25-mile radius