

WHAT WE DID

Frustrated with the steady stream of cars leaving the city during evening rush hour and feeling compelled to do *something* to change attitudes about the city, we decided to make Richmond the focus of our inaugural Frontier Sessions pro-bono economic development event. We invited people from business and academia who had deep experience with and passion for Richmond, and wanted their voices to be heard about the future of the city.

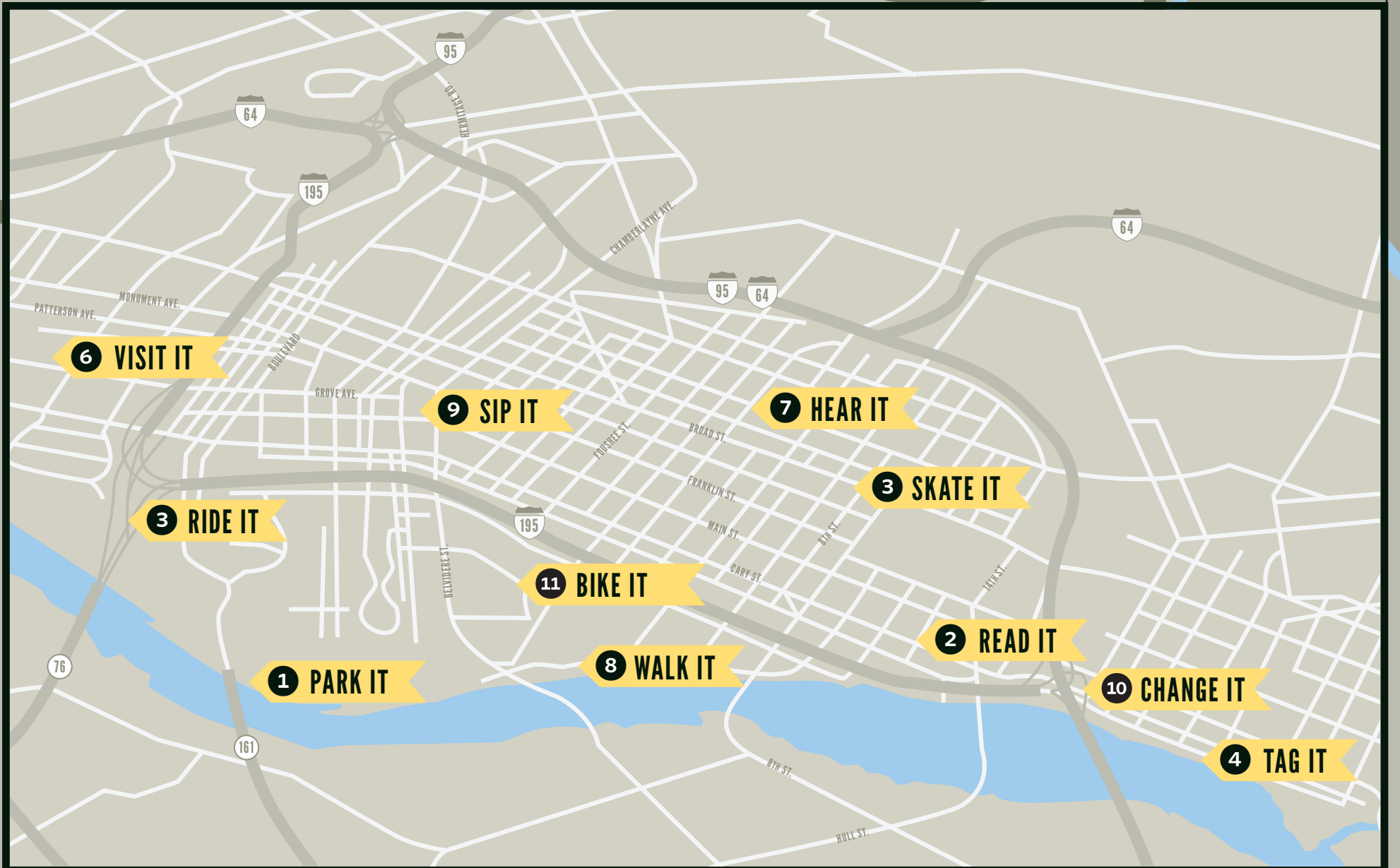
In a meeting that lasted the better part of a Friday, we explored what worked and what didn't in Richmond. The group identified cities that they loved and what they loved about them. Then, we selected a wide range of representative groups ('quiet intellectuals', 'art lovers,' 'skateboarders'), and asked the simple question: How do we get them into the city? The answers were varied and creative, but also practical. Using these results, we developed themes and calls to action that we believed the government and social leadership of Richmond could use to improve, the accessibility and appeal of the city.

WHY WE DID IT

We have all lived in cities we absolutely loved, and for each of us Richmond is one of those. Perhaps because we feel so strongly, we have a burning need to show people why we love it. And, we want to make the city an even better place to bring families, friends, dates, employees, pets, students, and anyone else who wants excitement or tranquility, urban architecture or natural space, or a great place to work, shop, dine, walk, worship, read, or entertain.

QUESTIONS?

For more information or to participate in future Frontier Sessions, please contact Corey Dyckman at corey@thefrontierproject.com.



LEARN' DESIGN' BUILD' CHANGE

FRONTIER SESSIONS

RICHMOND REPORT ✨

WHAT WE LEARNED

SOME THANKS ARE OVERDUE:

- ▶ Jim Porter & Sandy Appelman, operators of **TO THE BOTTOM AND BACK** bus service, for filling in a transportation gap between Richmond City & Henrico County
- ▶ **MEADWESTVACO** for relocating to Richmond & choosing to come downtown
- ▶ **SPORTSBACKERS** for hosting so many athletic events that highlight the city & bring people into it
- ▶ **VCU** for being a perennial bright, shining anchor in the city & for gobbling up real estate in parts of the city that many people had given up on
- ▶ The organizers of Richmond's **"CRITICAL MASS"** for attempting to make the city safer for cyclists
- ▶ **MAYOR JONES** for delivering a State-of-the-City address: this visibility provides reassurance & confidence to Richmonders that the city is the place to be

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

- ▶ **WEEKLY RANT** for compiling an easy-to-use, comprehensive calendar to make sure anyone who wants to can find something to do in Richmond
- ▶ **#52RVA** from Scott Garnett at Lift Coffee for highlighting the best that Richmond has to offer—& doing it in a memorable & lasting way

Richmond has a lot going for it...and a lot of potential. None of us could identify a sole underlying reason why Richmond isn't viewed as the best place to live and work in America. But, we could all put our fingers on at least one symptom that added to the city's limitations. Richmond struggles with many social and economic issues and is dramatically plagued by challenges with improving its school system, media that doesn't recognize or cover the good done by the city and other programs, divisive politics, and an ongoing racial divide.

Since we aren't going to change Richmond's politics anytime soon, we focused on how we could affect people's day-to-day lives. We wanted to tackle issues that could make an immediate impact. Collectively, we agreed that one of the most striking deficiencies is that Richmond lacks a common gathering place. There's no Central Park, Boston Common, or National Mall. There's no nationally-recognized Washington Monument, St. Louis Arch or Fisherman's Wharf that pulls guests in to the city. In fact, one conclusion we drew is that it's still very difficult to be a visitor to the city, despite all of the efforts that have gone into making it more welcoming. In this way, Richmond is its own worst enemy. We hope the following calls to action will further enhance the city's revitalization.

CALLS TO ACTION

1 PARK IT

We may not have Manhattan's skyline or LA's beaches; however, we realize that one aspect of Richmond that sets it apart is its natural beauty. We suggest Maymont Park and the downtown riverfront have permanent easels installed so that local artists can capture this beauty and encourage visitors to frequent these locations and see their work. We ask the Richmond Parks and Recreation Agency to commission these installations.

2 READ IT

Gathering places are not always physical. Sometimes, it's enough to know that others in the city are engaged in the same thinking as us. So, we debated the impact of starting a citywide book of the month club. The chosen book could be used as the basis for meetings and events around the city. As a group, we took on the responsibility for giving this idea life. We will call on other groups around the city to embrace the idea, too. Specifically, we would like to see book stores like Fountain, Black Swan, Narnia, Chop Suey, and Barnes & Noble promote read-alongs, discussion groups, or other activities that fit with the book of the month.

3 SKATE IT

We recognize that Richmond has more days above freezing than below. Many more. We question the value of an ice rink downtown when a skateboard and bike park outfitted for a wide range of ages and abilities would offer greater family entertainment and exercise value year-round. We ask the Mayor's office to reconsider plans for an ice-skating rink and replace or add to it plans for a skateboard and bike park.

4 TAG IT

The city needs more art. And, not the kind found at the VMFA. It needs urban art that inspires youth and adults alike. Let's put the humor of our citizens to work by starting a program enabling artists to paint legal graffiti and murals on section(s) of the floodwall. We ask city council and the Richmond Police Department to enact and enforce rules that allow this.

5 RIDE IT

The city needs tourist- and suburb-friendly transportation. GRTC should take a lesson from Washington DC (as much as that may pain them to do so) and add circulator bus service with routes that take suburban residents and tourists to key stops in Richmond for shopping, dining, entertainment, or museum-going—or it should publicly and financially support the growth of "To The Bottom and Back" in this same capacity.

6 VISIT IT

We think the city's Economic Development Agency should promote destination packages in the city. It should put together marketing that offers suggestions to visitors about destinations or activities to pair together. For example, visit the VMFA and Virginia Center for Architecture, have dinner at CanCan, and then catch a movie at the Byrd.

7 HEAR IT

Let's get music onto the streets—all of the time, not just for special events. We would like to challenge the neighborhood associations and the mayor's office to sponsor, fund, and promote street musicians. Take the panhandling aspect of it away, but leave the art and entertainment. It works for Byrd Theater by inviting street musicians to entertain while patrons wait to buy tickets; let's make it work all over the city. Spread out the genres but increase the number of musicians entertaining us while we wait or dine.

8 WALK IT

Richmond's Parks and Recreation Agency (and the National Park Service, where appropriate) should invest in the city's trails by producing trail maps and painting a path (a la Boston's Freedom Trail) for a slave trail, a Civil War trail, and a "green" trail for environmental landmarks. Take it a step further and develop podcasts narrated by famous, interesting Richmonders that guide visitors along the trails.

9 SIP IT

We call on the Richmond Parks and Recreation Agency to sponsor a coffeehouse/food stand in Monroe Park (similar to the Mall in Washington DC, Central Park, Bryant Park in New York, and Palais de Chaillot in Paris). This would increase use of the park, generate revenue for the city and create a viable gathering place for a wide range of visitors and residents. Restrictions could be eased to encourage other vendors, such as Joey's Hot Dogs, to set up near the park, too.

10 CHANGE IT

We ask the mayor's office to develop plans that put Main Street Station to better use—add a coffeehouse and/or restaurant, install wireless, open space for use as a gathering or work space, and promote availability of inexpensive parking in the lot across the street from the station. The city's Economic Development Agency could encourage community groups and businesses to rent or use the space.

11 BIKE IT

As part of the "green" Richmond campaign, we request that the Public Works Agency publish a guide to the safest road routes for biking through the city (collaborating with Critical Mass). Then, it should install bike racks and use sponsorship to pay for them—funny, eye-catching, unusual advertising only. The guide and these installations would be the first steps to becoming a bicycle-friendly city. The next step would be starting a bike-sharing service.