



OFFICE OF
**COMMUNITY
WEALTH BUILDING**

2025
FISCAL YEAR

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

Maggie L. Walker

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was produced by the City of Richmond's Office of Community Wealth Building on behalf of Mayor Danny Avula. We would like to recognize the following individuals for their contributions:

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PREFACE FROM THE MAYOR



What kind of city do we want to be?

That's a critical question, but to me it's not a hard question. We want to be a Thriving Richmond that leaves no one behind! Expanding economic opportunities for all to build a more inclusive city is one of the main reasons I ran for Mayor and it's now one of my administration's top priorities.

We are fortunate in Richmond to build on a solid foundation of strategy, policy, and practice laid by the Office of Community Wealth Building (OCWB) since its founding under former Mayor Dwight Jones. In my previous role with the Richmond Henrico Health District, I worked closely with the OCWB team on projects to address the needs of Richmond's public housing residents. I salute Mayor Jones's vision in establishing OCWB, as well as Mayor Stoney's commitment to expanding its efforts, especially youth-focused programming. And Richmond City Council has been a critical partner at every step of the journey.

An effective approach to reducing poverty and building community wealth must be holistic, interagency, and collaborative. Truly changing the structure of opportunity in our city and outcomes for residents must be the work of the City as a whole, not just a single agency.

That is why the work of fighting poverty and building wealth is woven into all seven pillars of my Mayoral Action Plan for a Thriving Richmond. Thriving Neighborhoods, Thriving Families, and a Thriving Economy are centrally related to strengthening outcomes for Richmond's families. But we won't achieve our goals unless we also make progress on improving City Hall functions, strengthening our inclusivity as an organization, making our built environment more sustainable, and sharing our stories.

The story of how OCWB came to be and the work that has been sustained it for over a decade is a great story! Mayor Jones set the goal of cutting our poverty rate from 25% to 15% by 2030, and we are already well over halfway towards that goal.

PREFACE FROM THE MAYOR

We know, however, that this progress is fragile, and that too many residents still remain economically marginalized. Others are having major challenges remaining in their neighborhoods as land values rise. There is still have so much to do in the work of building true community wealth.

That's why a holistic city-wide vision and plan are so important. Since I took office this year, my team has been working closely with OCWB to refocus priorities on its core mission of policy development and strategic vision. Programming commitments like workforce and youth-serving programs will continue but there will be strategic shifts to move the vision and mission forward. This makes sense, because Richmond is many ways a different City than when the Mayor's Anti-Poverty Commission was launched in 2011.

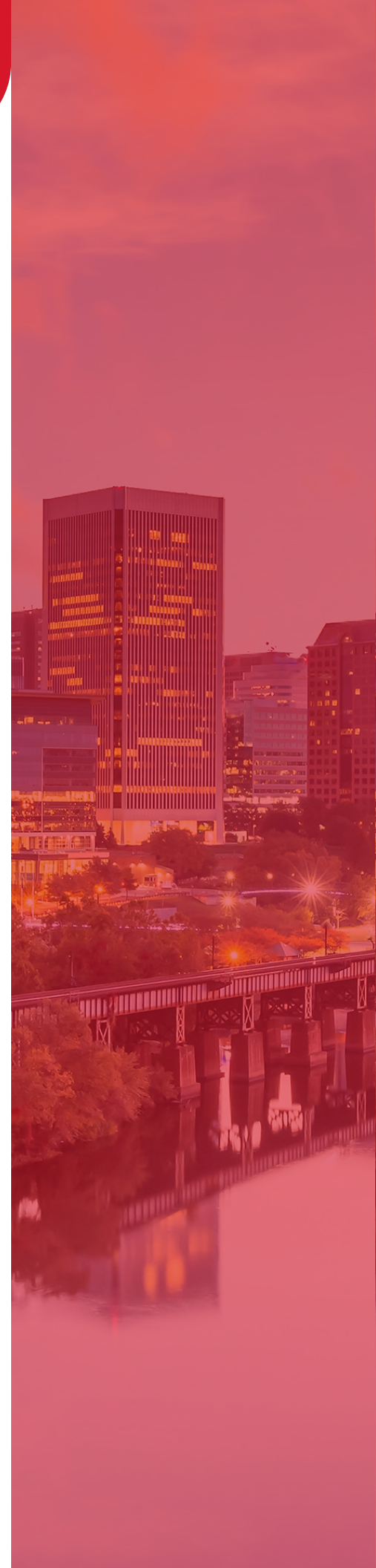
I embrace the work of OCWB, and the need to reset our collective strategy for economic empowerment for the next decade. We need to go bolder in our commitment to its mission: to drive solutions that improve quality of life and expand pathways to prosperity for all Richmond residents. This year's annual report of OCWB is an important initial step in that process, with more work ahead.

Working together, we will build a Thriving Richmond that leaves no one behind.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Mayor Danny Avula. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent 'D' and 'A'.

Mayor Danny Avula



STATEMENT FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER



Each year, the Office of Community Wealth Building affirms the City of Richmond's commitment to dismantling systemic poverty and expanding pathways to economic mobility for all residents. This work is vital to the families we serve.

Over the past year, the Office of Community Wealth Building has continued to provide access to opportunity and collaborate with public and private partners to create lasting change. Through workforce development, youth and family support, housing stabilization, and neighborhood-focused initiatives, the office remains a national model for how local government can drive equitable progress.

A key to this success lies in innovative partnerships and data-driven strategies that continue to shape the work. The office's collaboration with city departments, community-based organizations, and anchor institutions demonstrates what is possible when we approach poverty reduction as a collective responsibility. Partnerships ensure that residents have the tools, networks, and support needed to achieve long-term financial success.

The City, through the Office of Community Wealth Building, remains committed to empowering residents and removing barriers to opportunity. At its core, this work embodies Richmond's values of equity, inclusion, and shared prosperity.

To realize this vision, we remain laser focused on connecting Richmonders to education, employment, housing, and the various resources they need to build wealth and thrive. The progress outlined in this report is evidence of what can be achieved through intentional investment, collaboration, and an unwavering belief in the potential of every Richmond resident and stakeholder.

While the City and the Office of Community Wealth Building serve as key partners in delivering these services. We cannot do it alone. This work is only successful when it serves as a group project, leveraging contributions from community partners, and the many stakeholders who make this work possible. Together, we are moving Richmond forward and building a stronger, more equitable city for generations to come.

Odie Donald II

Chief Administrative Officer

STATEMENT FROM AMY POPOVICH



I am proud to recognize the Office of Community Wealth Building for its continued leadership in advancing economic mobility and equity across Richmond. This year's progress reflects deep collaboration, innovative thinking, and a shared commitment to ensuring that every resident has a real pathway to opportunity.

The work highlighted in this annual report showcases how the City of Richmond is supporting families, strengthening neighborhoods, and expanding access to education and employment, all while demonstrating the power of partnership. I am grateful to the OCWB team and our many community allies for their dedication and impact.

Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive Richmond where all residents can thrive.

Amy Popovich

DCAO, Human Services

STATEMENT FROM CAPRICHIA SPELLMAN



Each year, as I reflect on the work of the Office of Community Wealth Building, I am reminded that the true measure of our impact is not only found in charts or percentages — it is found in people. I think of Emanuel Johnson, who used the Richmond Resilience Initiative to stabilize his finances, earn his CDL, and step into a career that allows him to support his five sons while

pursuing his dream of homeownership. I remember Anthony Forrest, who began with us as a participant in a training program, went on to serve as a Transit Ambassador, and has since launched his own construction company — one that now trains and employs other Richmond residents. Their stories, and so many more, remind us why this work matters and what is possible when we center and invest in this city's greatest resource....its residents!

We remain steadfast in our goal to reduce poverty below 15% by 2030 — a commitment guiding us into a new era of innovation. We've expanded our efforts to align directly with high-demand industries, increasing our knowledge and bandwidth to equip residents with the skills and credentials to achieve generational stability and wealth. We're growing our partner network! Inviting those who not only support our non-traditional approaches to meet employment demands but also invest their time and money to foster innovative solutions increases outcomes for those who haven't always enjoyed equitable access to such possibilities. Together, we are proving that when we elevate community voice and build accordingly and intentionally, transformation is not only possible — it is inevitable.

And so, as we look forward, we celebrate the tough lessons we've learned just as we prepare for the new victories to come. Because our quest does not conclude until one non-negotiable achievement is obtained....that every resident enjoys the privilege to thrive!

With deep gratitude,

Caprichia Smith Spellman

Director, Office of Community Wealth Building





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reflecting on the Past

Since the Office of Community Wealth Building was established in 2014, Richmond has come a long way. The city's vision for poverty reduction has always been bigger than one office—it is an ecosystem of agencies, partners, and residents working together to dismantle generational barriers. Within this ecosystem, OCWB has taken on a range of tasks, running programs, coordinating community input, and serving as a convenor and advocate for the issues that will advance the city's bold goals of reducing the number of people in poverty by 40%, cutting child poverty in half, and lowering the overall poverty rate below 15%, all by 2030.

When OCWB was founded, more than one in four residents lived below the poverty line. That rate has fallen to 18.8% in 2023, showing how deliberate action can disrupt cycles of poverty, even as systemic barriers like racism, inequality, and educational disparities persist.

Living in the Present

That same steady progress defines the present. Over the past fiscal year, 90 participants secured jobs averaging nearly \$20 per hour, while Youth Works RVA provided more than 700 young people with work experiences totaling over 85,000 hours and \$1.1 million in wages. 64 opportunity youth received targeted support, with many moving into training or employment. Leadership development expanded as 62 Youth Council members built civic skills and 39 AmeriCorps members served at partner agencies supporting health, recovery, and environmental stewardship.

Economic empowerment continues to grow as well. 262 residents completed homeownership and financial education, 20 small business owners advanced through entrepreneurship training, and the city expanded its basic income program to serve 42 families. Nearly 400 residents were engaged through in-person needs assessments, while transitional jobs opened doors for 19 individuals with serious barriers to work, with 14 of them moving into full-time employment.

One participant, a single mother who entered OCWB's financial empowerment program, used her training to repair her credit, increasing it by 98 points, helping her secure stable housing and begin saving towards a home of her own.

Looking toward the Future

Looking forward, OCWB will continue to play its role within the broader ecosystem of poverty reduction. The office will deepen its focus on systems change to tackle structural inequities that perpetuate disadvantage, while aligning with Mayor's Avula's Action Plan and RVA Rising to strengthen collaboration among the many organizations working on economic opportunity.



THE PAST

Founding of OCWB & Anti-Poverty Commission

The City of Richmond founded the first-in-the-nation Office of Community Wealth Building (OCWB) in 2014. Its creation was a product of Mayor Dwight Jones's "Anti-Poverty Commission," which brought together 49 members to "develop a comprehensive plan to tackle the city's poverty crisis." OCWB's role has been to ensure that the city followed through on the plans laid out by the commission.

From the outset, OCWB understood that poverty is not a single condition but a continuum—from crisis to stability to thriving. The office adopted this framework to guide its strategies, ensuring that every initiative moved residents one step closer to long-term prosperity.

Measuring poverty is an imperfect proxy, but it was chosen as a galvanizing and easily understood goal—one that highlighted the scale of Richmond's poverty crisis, a status quo accepted for too long. OCWB's mission has never been simply to move residents across an arbitrary income threshold. Instead, the aim is to help individuals and neighborhoods thrive, with the ultimate goal of building generational wealth. Poverty reduction is a vital step, but it is only the first leg of the broader path toward economic mobility.



Goal One

To reduce the number of people living in poverty in the City of Richmond by 40% by 2030. This is an incredibly ambitious goal, but from 2015 until 2023 (the latest Census data), the number of people living in poverty has declined from approximately 52,000 to 41,000, a 20.9% decrease.

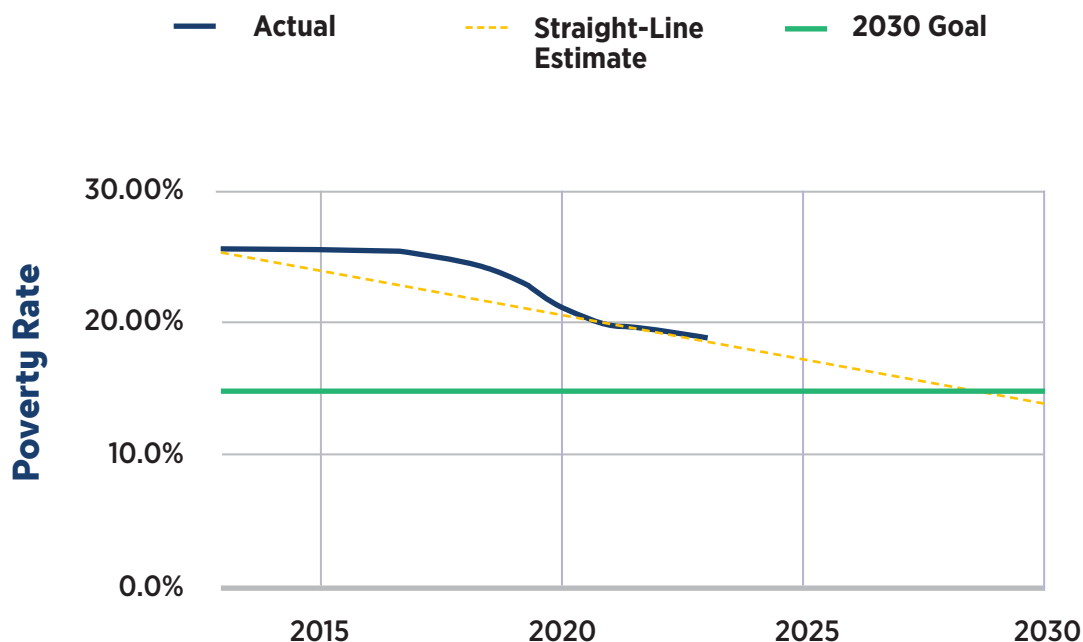
Goal Two

To reduce the number of children in the city living in poverty by 50%. In 2015, more than 15,000 children in Richmond lived below the federal poverty line - 2 out of every 5 young people. In 2023, that number stood near 11,000.

Goal Three

OCWB looked to decrease the city's poverty rate to 15% or lower. The poverty rate has declined from 25.5% in 2015 to 18.8% today.

Figure 1.1 **Changes in Poverty Rate**



Poverty in Richmond has declined further and faster than in the United States, Virginia, our neighboring counties, or other cities in Virginia of a similar size (such as Chesapeake, Newport News, and Norfolk).

Since these goals were established, Richmond’s economic and demographic context has shifted significantly. Rising housing costs have forced many residents to relocate outside the city—not out of choice, but because they could no longer afford to stay. This trend highlights the complexity of measuring progress solely by the number of residents in poverty within city limits. Poverty reduction remains a unifying and urgent goal, but it does not tell the broader story. To capture a more complete picture of resident well-being, the Mayor’s Action Plan introduces additional measures related to a “Thriving Economy,” offering valuable nuance as Richmond continues its work toward lasting economic mobility.

Key Achievements

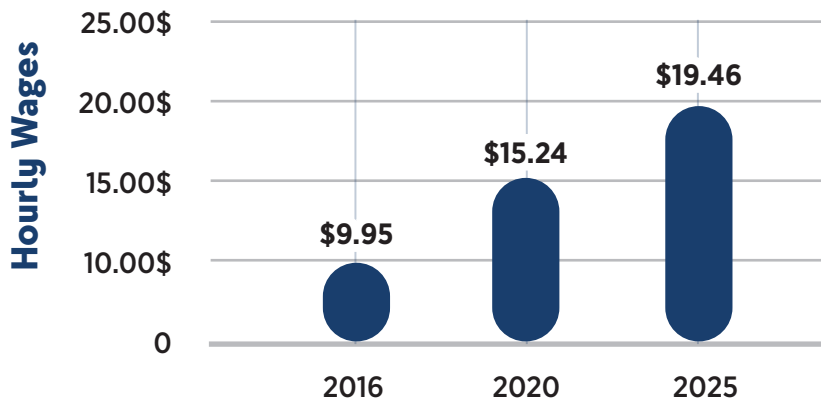
While the City cannot track which residents are moving to other localities voluntarily or because they can not afford the rising cost of living, OCWB can track the direct effects of its programs. From July 2014 through June 2024, OCWB has helped at least 2,420 people find a new job. These jobs have paid higher wages, offered full-time hours, and otherwise helped participants advance in their careers. With 10,000 fewer people living in poverty in Richmond, including 4,000 fewer children, it seems likely that some of these individuals are people who gained better jobs and higher wages through OCWB’s services.



2,420

individuals have secured
employment through
the OCWB

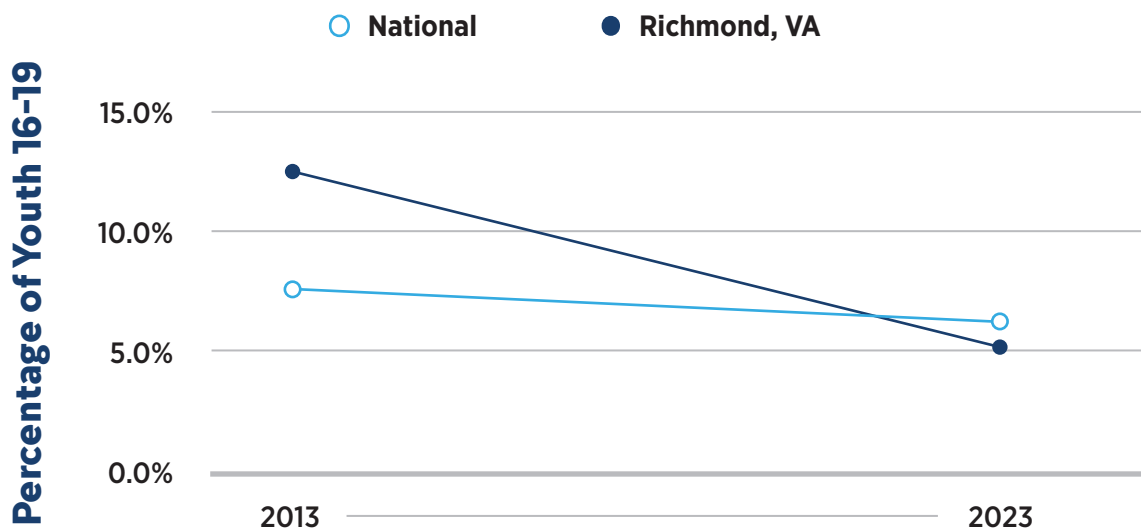
Figure 1.2 Increase of Average Hourly Wages



During this time period, the quality of jobs OCWB has been able to place participants in has also nearly doubled, from an average hourly wage of \$9.95 in Fiscal Year 2016 to \$15.24 in FY2020 to \$19.46 in FY2025.

Youth Works RVA (formerly known as the Mayor's Youth Academy) has provided 2,160 summer work experiences for young people in Richmond since 2019, including 703 youth served this summer – the largest in the program's history. From 2013 to 2023, Richmond City saw a decline in the proportion of 16-19 year-olds who are neither in school nor employed (sometimes called "disconnected youth" or "opportunity youth"), from just over 13% to 5.3% (from 1,651 people to 638 people). Over that same timeframe, national rates declined by much less, from 8.3% to 6.8%. This reflects the efforts of many individuals and institutions, especially RPS, but OCWB's programs have contributed to this decline.

Figure 1.3 **Changes in Opportunity Youth**



After more than a decade of sustained effort, Richmond has made meaningful progress toward its ambitious poverty reduction goals. These improvements reflect collaborative work across many city agencies, other governmental bodies like RRHA and GRTC, and the private and nonprofit sector. The needs of the City of Richmond have changed in the past decade, and the changes in Richmond’s demographics reflect both economic mobility and also involuntary displacement. The city should be proud of the past decade’s progress, while also recognizing that urgent needs, somewhat different from those established in 2013, remain to be met.



The City of Richmond is not the same place that it was in 2013 when OCWB’s vision and direction were first established. The city faces the opportunities and challenges associated with greater investment and population growth, city-wide strategies and plans in areas outside of wealth-building have changed, and the work of OCWB itself has evolved substantially over the past 11 years.

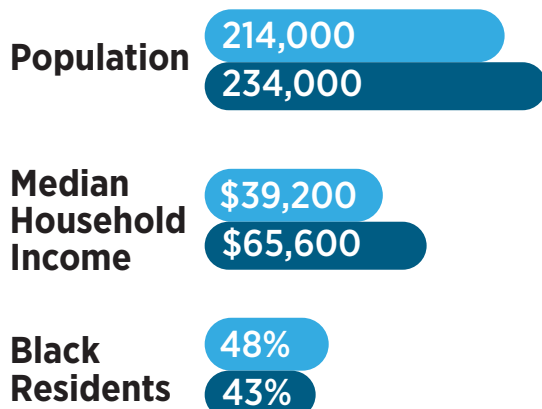
Shifts in Richmond’s Demographics & Economy

Richmond has undergone substantial change over the past decade. On the positive side, the city’s population grew from 214,000 in 2013 to 234,000 today, and median household income rose from \$39,200 to \$65,600. The labor market has strengthened as well, with unemployment dropping from 10.8% to 3.8% and Black employment increasing from 49.7% to 55.1%. These conditions have opened doors for more residents with barriers, and OCWB has adapted its focus from helping many secure entry-level jobs to supporting participants in building living-wage careers.

At the same time, challenges have deepened. The share of Black residents declined from 48% to 43%, which may reflect both who is moving to Richmond as well as who is leaving the city, by their own choice or because they are not able to afford the rising cost of living. Housing costs have increased dramatically, with the median home sales price climbing from \$184,000 to approximately \$350,000 between 2013 and 2023, and rent for a 2-bedroom apartment increasing from approximately \$950/month to \$1,550/month from 2013 to 2022. While Richmond hosts the region’s only public housing developments, there are few other affordable housing options left for working-class families.

Figure 2.1 Changes in Richmond’s Demographics and Economy

Demographics & Income



Richmond has increased in population and grown wealthier, but the share of Black residents has declined — reflecting both economic mobility and displacement pressures.

Housing Market

Median
Home Sales
Price

\$184,000

\$350,000

Average
Rent 2BR
Rent

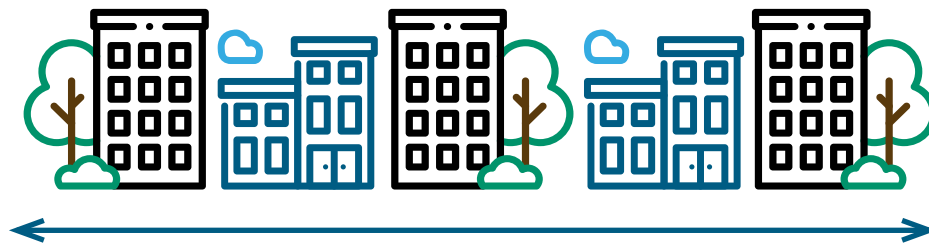
\$950

\$1,550

● 2013 ● 2022 ● 2023

Public Housing

2,535 Units

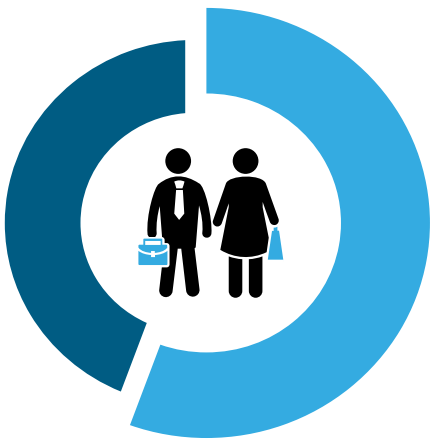
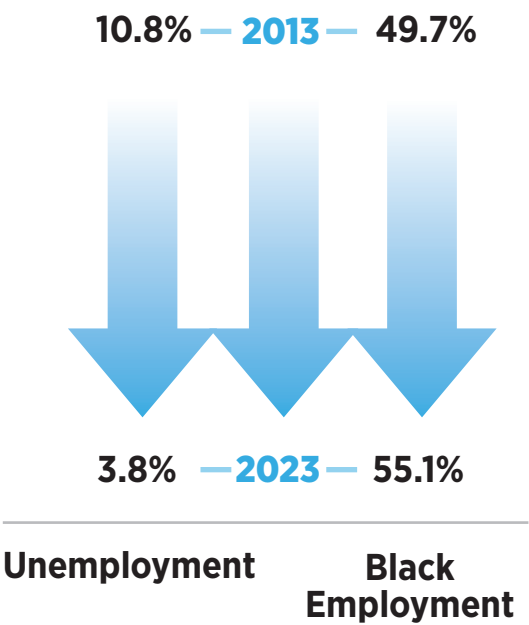


5 Major Developments*

No equivalent subsidized housing in nearby counties.
Richmond continues to shoulder the region's responsibility for deeply affordable housing.

* Excluding Creighton Court redevelopment

Employment Trends



Stronger labor markets have created new opportunities for residents who previously faced barriers such as criminal records, gaps in work history, or limited English proficiency.

OCWB’s Evolving Focus



2013: “Any job” approach to serve as many residents as possible.

2024: Focus on living-wage career pathways for long-term stability.

OCWB has adapted its strategies to ensure residents benefit from today’s stronger labor market while building toward generational wealth.

New Citywide Strategies

Despite the changes to the city described above, there has not been a comprehensive refreshed city-wide wealth building strategy since 2013. Many other city-wide strategies have been drafted in the intervening years:

- Richmond 300 guides the city's long-term growth.
- The Strategic Plan for Equitable Economic Development (SPEED) guides Richmond's economic development efforts.
- Virginia Career Works' Vision 2024 lays out a plan for the workforce programs run by Richmond's WIOA agency.
- The city has an official Equity Agenda, which City Council passed as a resolution.
- The Richmond Public Schools' Dreams4RPS plan lays out the school system's priorities.
- RVAgreen 2050 establishes metrics and action steps to reduce the city's carbon emissions.
- GRTC's 10-year strategic plan enumerates which routes are prioritized for service expansion each year over the next 10 years.
- Richmond Connects has created a multimodal transportation plan for the city.
- The Strategic Plan to End Homelessness 2020-2030 describes the city's efforts to support people who are unhoused.
- The city created a 5-year consolidated plan for the US Department of Housing and Urban Development describing how the city will improve housing options for low-income Richmonders.

In the absence of a revised formal wealth-building strategy since 2013, OCWB's work has evolved to reflect Mayoral and Council priorities in terms of programming, and OCWB has invested less time and effort into coordinating city-wide wealth-building initiatives.

Evolution of OCWB's role

In addition to city-wide shifts, OCWB's own work has evolved in response to changing circumstances and lessons learned. Early on, the office managed programs temporarily and then transitioned them to partners; over time, it began running more programs directly. Today, OCWB operates an AmeriCorps program that places community health workers and peer counselors, coordinates financial empowerment initiatives with the Treasurer, supports entrepreneurs with the Office of Minority Business Development, administers a basic income program, and manages youth employment and leadership programs. Staff also maintain a "boots on the ground" presence in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, including public housing communities, Southwood, and Belt Atlantic.

This broader portfolio has strengthened OCWB's community impact but shifted attention from strategy and policy toward program management. Workforce placement remains central, yet the work now spans financial stability, health, youth opportunity, and neighborhood engagement. Meanwhile, the city's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds are now administered by Virginia Career Works, with an agreement to continue serving Richmond residents.

OCWB is proud of its programmatic results, while remaining realistic about the limits of staffing and financial resources. Community wealth building—whether framed as reducing poverty, building wealth, or fostering economic mobility — requires patience, persistence, and partnership. These lessons are shaping how the office re-envision its role in the years ahead.

Career Services and Business Solutions

**OCWB
Placed
90**
individuals into
new jobs
Average wage:
\$19.46

The Career Services team equips Richmond residents for sustainable, living-wage careers while also supporting local employers. Participants gain workplace skills such as communication, teamwork, and professionalism, along with career preparation through resume writing, interview coaching, and credentialing programs at community colleges and technical centers. Staff help remove barriers to employment like childcare and transportation, ensuring residents can access opportunities. On the employer side, the Business Solutions team connects businesses with qualified candidates, supports workforce pipelines, and administers paid apprenticeships that allow residents to gain experience while meeting employers' needs for skilled workers.

In 2019, Anthony Forrest enrolled in the Office of Community Wealth Building (OCWB). Through its Ambassador Program, he gained leadership training, built community connections, and earned his project management credentials. Anthony's passion was construction, and by 2020 he had launched B & S Development Inc., specializing in renovations, additions, and new construction. As a Certified Quality Manager with SWaM and DBE certifications, he has secured over \$250,000 in contracts and forecasts further growth in revenues. Today Anthony is giving back to OCWB, training 25 individuals in maintenance and construction, creating opportunities for mentorship, employment, and support for returning citizens.

Youth Works RVA

Formerly the Mayor's Youth Academy, this program places Richmond youth ages 14–24 in seven-week, paid summer jobs. Participants earn \$13 per hour for 15–25 hours weekly at partner sites in city government, nonprofits, and local businesses. Younger youth follow a career exploration track, while older participants complete internships. The program's goal is to give young people hands-on experience that helps shape their educational and career decisions after graduation.

**703 youth participants:
603 during the Summer 2025
program and 100 in other tracks.**

**Youth worked 85,094 hours at 114
total partner employers, earning
\$1,106,225 in wages.**

**65% of employers would hire their
intern if positions were available.**

Kemond Williams began his journey in 2018 as a Counselor-in-Training with the City of Richmond's Department of Parks and Recreation. Over the years, he gained valuable experience through multiple internships, starting with the Founders Mark winter cohort and the Virtual Earn & Learn program in 2022. In 2023, he returned to the City's Summer Work-Based Learning program, hosted by the Office of Community Wealth Building, where he reported directly to Director Caprichia Spellman and Program Manager Steve King. He continued in 2024 with the same program, supporting Logistics Specialist Dr. Pamela Newton. By 2025, with a clear career interest in education, counseling, and training, Kemond was placed with Challenge Discovery. His impact there was so strong that he was invited to stay on as a full-time Group Facilitator, turning years of growth and service into a permanent role.



YES Forward

YES Forward is designed to serve “opportunity youth”: young adults age 18-24 who are neither in school nor employed. The program was started this year, with 2 cohorts (in the fall and the spring). Each cohort has four weeks of career readiness and a work placement. The goal is for opportunity youth to either end with permanent employment or enrollment in further school or training (thus making them no longer fit the definition of “opportunity youth.”) Participants create career plans and improve their immediate and longer-term economic well-being.

The program had 50 participants in its first two cohorts.

27 youth placed into paid apprenticeships

17 youth transitioned to further training or employment after the program. Through work at the Richmond Technical Center, OCWB supported 14 other opportunity youth, 2 of whom transitioned into education or employment.

When Ailyah Blackshear joined YES Forward in October 2024, she set her sights on a career in Information Technology. After four weeks of career readiness training and ongoing coaching, she confirmed her path and began postsecondary learning at Reynolds Community College, where she earned her CompTIA+ certification. She then completed an eight-week paid work experience with Chosen2Lead, applying her new skills under the mentorship of her supervisor, Kyle. In March 2025, her dedication was rewarded with a full-time job offer from Chosen2Lead—a milestone she proudly accepted. Today, Ailyah is turning her vision into reality, building a career in IT while laying the foundation for long-term stability and growth.

Youth Leadership Councils

The Youth Empowerment Council (YEC) is a longstanding, selective program for RPS high school students, administered on weekday evenings during the school year. It helps young people apply their leadership skills. Youth LEADS is a new program designed to serve youth who may not yet have the skills expected for Youth Empowerment Council, but who are interested in developing as leaders.



These students completed community service projects and jointly created a PSA to address youth violence. At the end of the program, students reported high levels of confidence in “advocating for your causes and/or concerns” (4.7 on a scale of 1-5).

Davion Washington was a dedicated member of Youth Empowerment Council, OCWB’s youth civic leadership cohort, where she worked on issues of gun violence and was recognized by her peers as a Youth Navigator. Davion later interned with the Mayor’s Office. A proud graduate of Richmond Public Schools, Davion also participated in summer internships through OCWB. She received a full scholarship to Howard University, where she is pursuing a pre-med track.



AmeriCorps

RVA Health Corps places AmeriCorps members in roles as community health workers and peer recovery specialists, supporting residents who face challenges related to chronic health conditions, substance use disorders, and other barriers to well-being. The program has a dual mission: to engage members in meaningful service that addresses social determinants of health, the opioid crisis, and related challenges, and to create a service-to-career pipeline that equips participants with job skills, credentials, and environmental stewardship component, where an AmeriCorps member works with elementary school students to build environmental awareness while improving public parks and green spaces through invasive species removal, trail maintenance, and the planting of native species.

39
Corps
members
served at
17
partner
agencies

During this program year (Sept 2024 – Aug 2025), community health workers supported by RVA Health Corps had 19,846 encounters to provide health services, and helped people manage their chronic health conditions 7,120 times. Peer recovery coaches have helped more than 620 clients with their recovery from substance use disorder, and a broader SUD outreach program has had more than 3,908 contacts with people to share opioid addiction prevention resources. (This program ends in late September, so these two data points only reflect the first three quarters of the program year)



When the nonprofit where she worked closed in early 2025, Kai Banks, Richmond native and single mother of three, was suddenly unemployed. She soon joined RVA Health Corps' AmeriCorps program with Meals on Wheels, gaining new skills in case management and senior support. Kai later enrolled in OCWB's SOLVE Academy, where she explored healthcare pathways and workplace readiness. She refined her resume and eventually secured a position as Finance Specialist at VCU's School of the Arts. Managing budgets and supporting grants—all while beginning Interdisciplinary Studies coursework at VCU using her AmeriCorps education award. "Coming to OCWB kept me motivated and stopped me from becoming discouraged," Kai shared.

Wealth Building

The Wealth Building program helps Richmond residents build financial well-being through connections with credit unions and banks, budgeting advice, credit recovery, and other services related to financial empowerment. The program also supports current and aspiring local entrepreneurs by offering a 13-week curriculum on entrepreneurship, one-off classes on specific topics of interest, and back-office support for small businesses that have the drive and creativity to start a business but who may need help with accounting, marketing, or other specific skills. The Wealth Building team further supports well-being as a source of wealth by linking participants to programs that support healthy eating and other wellness practices.

123 individuals
provided financial
empowerment trainings

262 individuals
provided homeownership
education (in collaboration
with partners)

20 individuals
reached through
entrepreneurship class
and coaching

In just four months, Chefitha Williams has made significant progress in strengthening her financial health—raising her credit score by 98 points. Through her work with the Credit Restoration Institute, along with intentional budgeting, timely payments, and a commitment to healthier credit habits, she has transformed her financial profile and built a stronger foundation for the future. Chefitha is now working towards her next big step: purchasing a home.

Richmond Resilience Initiative

The Richmond Resilience Initiative is our city's basic income pilot program. RRI has supported 3 cohorts of 96 families total, who receive \$500 per month for 24 months. To be eligible for RRI, a household must be making too much money to qualify for means-tested public benefits (like food stamps and Medicaid) but too little money to afford the cost of living in Richmond. In addition to receiving funds, RRI families have (optional) opportunities to attend financial empowerment sessions, receive support with career advancement, and access other OCWB services.

RRI's third cohort, which includes 30 justice-involved individuals, will receive their final payment in October 2025. OCWB negotiated a contract for Cohort 4, which will serve 42 single parent households. The contract with UpTogether included over \$60,000 in matching funds to offset the full administrative costs of the contract.

William Carey joined the second cohort of RRI from 2022–2024. A father of three, he used the subsidy to help cover household expenses while his wife, Elizabeth, pursued her nursing degree at a local community college. Elizabeth successfully completed her studies and stepped into a stable, in-demand career. What began as short-term support for the Carey family became a long-term investment in their financial security and future.

Social Impact

Driven by what communities ask for, Social Impact creates new time-limited projects that address those needs. This year Social Impact invited every RRHA tenant council member, as well as teachers, pastors and other residents, for an open-ended listening forum. Based on their request for more data from residents about resident needs, Social Impact paid local residents to canvass neighborhoods to assess barriers and to connect residents to services, while providing job training to the canvassers who went on to gain permanent employment elsewhere. The listening session also led to a project with Thalhimer to train new maintenance workers based on community feedback that young people needed job opportunities working with their hands. Social Impact also facilitated a mental wellness session attended by both OCWB staff and residents based on community feedback that staff and residents should do more joint activities.



394 residents
conducted with in-person needs
assessments to match them with
city programming.



Participated in
45 community events



19 temporary jobs created
to help prepare residents for
work; successfully placed 14 of
those participants into full-time
employment.

Lateef Jones (a pseudonym we're using to protect his privacy) spent six long years experiencing homelessness, cycling between nights in shelters and sleeping in his car. The instability took a toll, but he remained determined to find a way forward. His turning point came one day outside the Salvation Army, when he spoke with the Office of Community Wealth Building's Social Impact team. This connection opened the door to wraparound services that addressed the barriers standing in his way. With personalized support, Lateef was able to access resources for housing, employment readiness, and financial stability. He later secured a job with the Department of Public Utilities earning \$17 an hour through a staffing agency. The steady income allowed Lateef to rent a home, marking the end of years of uncertainty and the beginning of a new chapter of stability and self-sufficiency.

The work of poverty reduction is the work of the City of Richmond, not any individual office. The Office of Community Wealth Building is evolving its programmatic efforts to reflect changes in Richmond and lessons learned from the past. While OCWB is proud of its results from Fiscal Year 2025, the office's plans for the coming year in many ways reflect a return to its roots, and in other ways reflect the lessons learned along the way.

Aligning OCWB with City and Regional Plans

Mayor Avula's administration has laid out an Action Plan that will drive OCWB's work for FY2026. Much of these projects belong under the Mayor's fourth pillar, "A Thriving Economy (that leaves no one behind)." OCWB contributes to key outcomes related to employment, poverty, earnings, and financial assets. Its work also contributes to creating "thriving families" (the third pillar) and "thriving and inclusive communities" (the fifth pillar).

In addition to the Mayor's Action Plan, major philanthropic, private-sector, and governmental organizations in our region are collaborating through the "RVA Rising" initiative. Spearheaded by the Community Foundation, the United Way, ChamberRVA, PlanRVA, and the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, RVA Rising aims to improve economic mobility and opportunity in the Richmond region by intentionally crosses jurisdictional lines. OCWB sees RVA Rising as an opportunity to fulfill one of the principles outlined in Richmond's 2013 anti-poverty strategy: that Richmond City should not carry the burden of addressing the crisis of poverty alone. The initiative is relatively new, and its exact structure and goals are not yet determined, but OCWB is eager to collaborate through RVA Rising towards a shared vision of community wealth.



In light of these two efforts, as well as the many other existing strategic plans for specific topics in our city (like equitable economic development and transit expansion), OCWB is not planning to create a new strategic plan to build community wealth. If such a process emerges as a next step from the Mayor's Action Plan, RVA Rising, or another source, OCWB may revisit this decision.

Returning to OCWB's Statutory Roles

The statute that established the Office of Community Wealth Building, city code §2-742, assigned a range of duties to the office. In recent years, OCWB has focused primarily on running programs, but programmatic operations cover only two of the many tasks assigned to OCWB. In FY2026, OCWB is planning to re-invest in its work to coordinate the collective wealth-building efforts of the city, other quasi-governmental agencies, and nonprofits. OCWB also plans to redouble its efforts related to "systems change": policy changes undertaken by the city, state, or other partners that improve community wealth.

If wealth is a metaphorical banquet, OCWB's work has always been to ensure that every person in the city has a seat at the table. For that reason, OCWB is framing its new vision as a "stool" and that offers a seat to those for whom such access has been systemically obstructed. Programs, coordination, and systems change will serve as the legs of OCWB's stool.

Figure 3.1 OCWB's areas of focus for FY26



OCWB will continue to administer its current suite of programs, but will seek opportunities to reduce our efforts in areas that are better addressed by other city agencies or local nonprofits. This will create the capacity needed to strengthen OCWB’s coordination and systems change efforts despite a reduction in headcount in the FY2026 budget.

These three areas of work encompass all of the activities delegated to OCWB in city code §2-742:

Figure 3.2 OCWB Functions According to City Code §2-742

Coordination	Systems Change	Programs
Coordinate the activities of other city agencies and external organizations related to addressing poverty	Provide recommendations to the Mayor on strategies, investments, and policies to reduce poverty	Deliver workforce development and wealth enhancement programs for the City
Develop strategy and performance measures for reducing poverty and improving economic opportunity	Conduct community outreach related to addressing poverty and informing policy	May administer funds appropriated by Council for specific initiatives (e.g., the Richmond Resilience Initiative) to advance the city’s economic mobility agenda

Coordination

The Office of Community Wealth Building coordinates partnerships, amplifies resident voice, and uses data to drive collective action. Its people-centered approach strengthens collaboration among agencies and organizations committed to community investment. By centering lived experience in design, governance, and accountability, OCWB promotes “data with dignity,” ensuring community-informed metrics and evaluation guide Richmond’s economic mobility efforts.

OCWB aligns workforce systems, employers, and training providers to create family-sustaining careers, scale hiring pipelines with wraparound supports, and hold employers accountable for job quality and local hiring. In FY2026, these efforts will advance through the Rewarding Work pillar of RVA Rising.

The office also plans to develop dashboards that track progress across city agencies and community partners, providing a shared view of outcomes. To further the city’s poverty reduction goals (40% overall and 50% among

youth by 2030) OCWB will convene an Economic Mobility Workgroup with partners such as the Department of Economic Development, the Office of Minority Business Development, and Housing and Community Development. Resident advisory groups and community-based practitioners will also play a key role, influencing program design, policy, and funding priorities. Already, feedback from these groups has informed partnerships with the Department of Labor to expand apprenticeship pathways across city agencies, including skilled trades and logistics.

Systems Change

Altering how policies are written and implemented is essential to removing barriers and creating long-term opportunities for Richmond residents. OCWB will advocate for changes to laws, ordinances, and regulations—or for stronger implementation of existing ones—when those adjustments can support a thriving city. This includes exploring how the city’s updated zoning code might encourage economic integration and reduce displacement, or how hiring policies can expand access to jobs for overlooked talent.

In 2025, OCWB will lead a policy barrier audit using an economic equity lens, grounded in power sharing and community voice. Residents will be invited into the process through focus groups, work sessions, and community conversations, ensuring that lived experience shapes both the analysis and the solutions. The findings will inform policy recommendations that are shared publicly to drive accountability and reform.

OCWB will also identify best practices in employment solutions for justice-involved residents and work to expand job opportunities for priority populations across the city.

Programs

Creating an inclusive economic ecosystem that improves quality of life and expands pathways to prosperity requires diverse and innovative programming. The OCWB is committed to helping residents move beyond short-term poverty alleviation toward long-term asset building and generational wealth. To support this goal, the office will promote local procurement, strengthen entrepreneurship training, and expand opportunities for children and families.

OCWB will continue and grow key programs such as AmeriCorps, Business Solutions, Career Services, Wealth Building, and Youth Engagement. These investments will support the launch of worker-owned co-ops and social enterprises that respond to community needs, expand Youth Works RVA to provide work-based learning for youth ages 14–24, and deepen partnerships with financial institutions to advance matched savings, credit restoration, and other wealth-building strategies.

While the office will devote more staff time to systems change and coordination in the coming year, it will maintain a robust suite of programs. Program data from FY2026 will guide decisions about which initiatives to merge, restructure, or sunset. To support this process, OCWB has developed a comprehensive logic model for each program, outlining inputs, outputs, outcomes, and intended impact to ensure decisions are evidence-based and community-informed.

Figure 3.3 OCWB Program Outputs and Outcomes

Youth Works RVA	Number of youth who participate in the program	Employer survey of desire to hire the youth intern
YES Forward	Number of youth who participate in the program	Number of youth who exit “opportunity youth” status (i.e., who are employed or in education after the program concludes)
Youth Council	Number of youth who participate in the program	Pre vs. post self-report of youth leadership skills
Career Services & Business Solutions	Number of job placements	Average wages of job placements
AmeriCorps	Number of community members served by AmeriCorps members	Number and percent of service members who transition into jobs post-service
Wealth Building	Number of people participating in programming	Number of participants who improve at least one level on a Crisis to Thriving rubric (tentative, under development)
Social Impact	Number of residents contacted who participate in OCWB programming	(Contributes to goals of other teams)
RRI	Number of families enrolled	Overhead and administrative costs, in money and staff time (lower is better)

OCWB is proud of the progress achieved over the past decade and of the community’s collective efforts to confront poverty in Richmond. As Mayor Dwight C. Jones once underscored, poverty in our city is a “crisis” that had been overlooked for far too long. While milestones have been reached, there remain far greater opportunities to deepen impact by applying lessons learned and investing in what works.

Shifts in Richmond’s demographics, economy, and community priorities require a renewed approach—one that aligns with Mayor Avula’s vision for a thriving city. The work has already begun! OCWB has started assembling a list of policy opportunities that could support wealth building, based on feedback from community stakeholders. The office has convened conversations with other City departments about hosting apprenticeships for entry-level roles that could support City residents with living-wage jobs. OCWB is collaborating to ensure resident voice is a part of updated City processes and policies. In this next phase, OCWB will remain steadfast in its mission: to ensure that every Richmonder has the opportunity to thrive.



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