



Storefront for Community Design
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Storefront for Community Design was founded in 2011 with the support of the City of Richmond so that neighbors could have access to pro bono design and planning assistance to support their businesses, residences, organizations and neighborhoods as a whole. Our services connect Richmonders to one another in a variety of ways, with the end goal of seeing an improved quality of life for all residents of the City of Richmond, particularly those most vulnerable. We currently operate with one full and two part-time staff and operational and programmatic support from the City of Richmond would allow us to make our two part time staff members full time, and increase our already broad impact in throughout the City of Richmond.

Storefront offers services to city residents, nonprofits, businesses and civic groups through six programmatic areas: 1) Design Session, 2) Community Workshops, 3) mOb Studio, 4) Recovery by Design, 5) Six Points Innovation Center (6PIC), and 6) Community Improvement Days. We operate in tandem with a group of 120 professional volunteers who meet our calls to action for the love of our city.

1) **Design Session** is Storefront's pro bono design assistance program. Design Session offers one-on-one advice, sketches, and plans of action from certified design and planning professionals to Richmonders who are seeking to get their ideas to a place of action. Since our founding in 2011 we have completed more than 270 design session consultations with Richmonders from every city council district. These sessions, coordinated and facilitated by Storefront Staff, average 6 hours of volunteer labor toward the clients goals. Our graphic design volunteers have helped clients create logos, business cards, books, websites, catalogs, board games, media campaigns, PSAs, safety signage, wayfinding, and poster campaigns. Our interior design volunteers have assisted with the re-imaging of nonprofit office spaces, schools, clinics, historic structures, restaurants, churches, and yet to be conceived storefronts and businesses. Our architect volunteers have assisted scores of homeowners, nonprofits and business owners with facade improvement ideas, worked with them to understand the City's rules and regulations and helped neighborhoods re-envision our historic streetcar suburbs and urban fabric. Our landscape architecture volunteers have worked with community members to layout community gardens, public spaces, and backyards to make them more beautiful,

sustainable and accessible. Our urban planning volunteers have assisted with navigation of the zoning ordinance, master plan, and city application processes. Each of these hundreds of consultations leaves our clients with steps forward toward achieving their design or planning goals - to start new businesses, to renovate long-owned historic homes, to assist with aging in place, to organize civic groups - that make our city better. We do not compete with the private sector in offering these services as we do not offer official or stamped drawings - we do however open the often ambiguous and confusing design and planning processes up to our neighbors and make them accessible and actionable. Many of our clients use the outcomes of their design session, a sketch, an outline, or a logo concept - to raise money to implement their ideas in Richmond.

- 2) **Community Workshops** are Storefront's public input and engagement offering. Since our founding we've held 12 full scale community workshops for neighborhood, civic, merchant, and friends associations throughout the City: Carver, Springhill, Eastview, Brookland Theater, St. Elizabeth's School Site, City Stadium, Byrd Park, Westhampton, Robinson Street, Scott's Addition, Highland Park, and Creighton Court. In each of these engagement processes we were invited to facilitate public input by neighborhood associations, council people, and/or businesses. All of our workshop processes are a bit different as they are designed with the community members who have invited us to work with them. These range from a series of public meetings, to working charrettes, to voting prioritization exercises to surveys, to oral history collection, to lemonade listening stations, and many combinations of these data collection methods. Each process is designed with the end outcome of sharing the voices we heard in our process in a readable and actionable document that can be utilized by the community who commissioned it for their ongoing neighborhood planning efforts. We've also held multiple smaller scale workshops alongside our nonprofit partners who are seeking to be better neighbors in their communities by assisting them with feedback mechanisms, surveys and data collection options they can utilize for their engagement purposes. In each workshop process we work with neighborhood and Storefront volunteers to collect data and produce a report.
- 3) **The mOb Studio** is Storefront's ongoing partnership with the design departments from VCUarts. mOb stands for "Middle of Broad" - where the studio is located at 205 E. Broad Street. Since 2012 Storefront has coordinated and sourced projects to the interdisciplinary design studio. At mOb, VCU students from across the university, work collaboratively in teams of 3-4 with real, Richmond-based clients who have design needs. These are projects that come in through our Design Session (see #1) but need a more thorough and focused semester-long effort. mOb projects are overseen by VCU faculty, Storefront staff, and professional mentors from Storefront's volunteer base. A majority of the clients are Richmond nonprofits who don't have the budgets or staff to design and implement solutions that help them better tell their

stories or serve their clients. Through this process approximately 180 clients have received design deliverables to improve their nonprofits, small businesses and residences. 360 VCU students have been immersed in the city and built their portfolios with real world experience helping Richmonders - and many of them have decided to stay and start their own businesses to live and work in their newfound home.

4) **Recovery by Design** is a three year partnership between the Richmond Behavioral Health Authority, the mOb Studio and Storefront to co-create, and destigmatize mental illness. Through a yearly series of six to eight, two to five hour, design workshops, Storefront staff, mOb studio designers and clients from RBHA have worked together to tackle design prompts, learn new skills, and work side-by-side to create together. Volunteers from Storefront, the mOb studio and the general public all participate in making with clients recovering from addiction, intellectual disabilities, and mental illness. This project was funded twice by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) who saw our innovative partnership as progress in the destigmatization of mental illness. We're not funded to continue this partnership though we're seeking funding to keep it going as the client benefits from pre-post interviews show improvements in sociability and general excitement in skill building. Skills learned: drawing, screen-printing, pattern making, sewing, videography, poster design, clay modeling, sound recording, zine making, dress making, t-shirt design, billboard creation (2 are still up), stamp making and fabric dying. The tools provided through this workshop are actionable and items created and sold to the public have resulted in dollars directly back in the hands of the clients who created them. Everyone knows someone struggling with mental illness, and the process of co-creation assists in the destigmatization of mental health as participants, from RBHA and the general public, work together, form friendships, and make alongside one another as colleagues.

5) **The Six Points Innovation Center (6PIC)** is a Storefront-led teen serving nonprofit collaborative in Highland Park. Built on six years of community organizing in the neighborhood as part of the Highland Park Quality of Life Plan development and implementation, 6PIC fills one of the major requests of the quality of life planning process: Strengthening Neighborhood Youth. 6PIC is a collective, an open and safe space, and an evolving partnership between Storefront, Groundwork RVA, Saving Our Youth Virginia, ART 180, Boaz & Ruth, Community 50/50, Untold RVA, the Association of Black Social Workers, RVA Rapid Transit, Virginia LISC, CPDC, the Highland Park Quality of Life team and Richmond Public High School students from every High School in the City. The 6PIC idea, that presence is power, was initially funded by a \$125K grant from the Robins Foundation that allowed for the renovation of a 4,000sq ft space owned by Boaz & Ruth. Opening in June of 2017, 6PIC serves an average 20 youth per day in scheduled programming provided by partner organizations. Scores of community events have been held in the space including the community

conversation with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that assisted in Richmond being awarded for our "Culture of Health." Currently, 6PIC Partners are going through a strategic planning and evaluation process to build out how the layered services of multiple nonprofits can intentionally overlap to improve equity and health in our community (see attached strategic planning documents). To support this effort, the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation and Capital One have invested in our programmatic partnership "CITY BUILDERS." This intentional layering of nonprofit services to support teens, follow the lead of community members, and make housing and transportation policy recommendations is currently operating with our first cohort of teens from across the city.

- 6) **Community Improvement Days** are Storefront's way of gathering volunteers to add fresh coats of paint, plant trees and flowers, and pick up trash in Richmond neighborhoods. Our first effort was held along the 300 block of East Broad Street in coordination with the Downtown Neighborhood Association, the Broad and Grace merchants, and the City. We repainted 11 facades, cleared trash out of empty storefronts, and hung approved signage for existing businesses. This effort brought out 75 community volunteers. Since then we've held 6 of these days near the Six Points Intersection in Highland Park - repainting 6 buildings, adding three murals, collecting hundreds of bags of trash, installing planters for business owners, and cleaning alley ways. These all hands on deck days often happen in partnership with our private sector friends. Businesses participating in these days thus far have included: Capital One, Dominion Energy, Altria, and the B-Corp community. Community members and neighborhood youth join many people who've never been to their neighborhood before and give them background, and lead teams of volunteers during these beautification efforts. Storefront staff coordinate, organize, and oversee these efforts.

Operational and programmatic support for Storefront for Community Design sustains these efforts in the City of Richmond, and allows us the opportunity to continue to innovate and provide services that improve individual, nonprofit, business and neighborhood quality of life in our city. Our staff, participants, clients, volunteers, and youth partners represent the beautiful diversity of our City's population, and we intend to continue holding space for neighbors, other nonprofits, and community members to have their ideas heard. Operational and programmatic support would allow Storefront's one full and two part time staff, to become three full time staff, to better plan, organize, and collect data on the efforts we make each day to improve the quality of life in our city.