

CREW RICHMOND

30TH ANNIVERSARY

Then and Now: Downtown by Amelia Wehunt

Our downtown Richmond skyline is constantly changing. Just last month we watched the implosion of Dominion Energy's One James River Plaza office tower. Last year we welcomed the new 20-story addition of 600 Canal Place, and in 2015 we added Gateway Plaza and a new street grid to accommodate this 18-story building.



The James Center Complex opened its doors in the late 1980s, going down in history as downtown's largest mixed-use project of the time. In 2009, WestRock chose Richmond as their new home and opened their 11-story headquarters overlooking the James River. These changes to our City's landscape over the past 30 years signify change and opportunity as Richmond makes way for the future.

In 2016, our skyline changed again when the Central National Bank building, a historic art deco skyscraper, reopened as an upscale apartment community called Deco at CNB. This historic preservation was part of the revitalization of downtown Richmond's arts and cultural district, along the Broad Street corridor. This stretch, filled with art galleries, performance arts centers, and music venues, has created a lively destination within the City that attracts visitors from near and far.

One of Richmond's oldest streets, Grace Street, has seen its own resurgence in recent years. Over the last decade, Grace Street switched from a one-way to two-way traffic pattern and, along this stretch, has developed a diverse restaurant scene with popular spots like Secret Sandwich Society, Rappahannock, Pop's Market on Grace, and Wong Gonzalez.

The revitalization of downtown Richmond has created an influx of opportunity, with adaptive reuse and renovation projects bringing a flood of new businesses, restaurants, and residences to the downtown area that create new places for people to live, work, and play.

With the recent impacts of COVID-19, we will see, once again, a rapidly changing downtown core that will continue to adapt with the new normal. With a commercial real estate vacancy rate of 5.8%, it will be interesting to see how our office spaces, entertainment venues, retail businesses, and restaurants adjust to incorporate social distancing, virtual connection, and online ordering into their fit-outs.

What we can all agree on is the importance of relationships and our community as we adapt. Downtown Richmond has proven to be resilient, changing and transforming with the times, while still staying true to its historic roots. As we move forward, it's up to us to help shape the future of our City. What trends do you think we'll begin to see in the wake of the coronavirus? How can we help our clients adjust? Feel free to reach out to me to share your ideas!