

READY. SET. RICHMOND!

By Chris Moody, VAS Contributed

RICHMOND REGION PREPARES TO SHINE AS HOST OF THE VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Richmond surrounding localities will take center stage this summer as it plays host to the Virginia Commonwealth Games for the first time, bringing a statewide spotlight and thousands of visitors to the Capital region.

Planning is in its final stages, so now the focus is on execution. Coordinating venues across seven localities served by Richmond Region Tourism -- the cities of Richmond and Colonial Heights, the town of Ashland, and the counties of Chesterfield, Henrico, New Kent, and Hanover -- while delivering a high-quality experience, and positioning the Richmond area as a long-term destination for major events will be the mission.

"This is a really unique opportunity," said Danny Bonifas, director of Sports and Events for Richmond Region Tourism. "We get the chance to roll out the red carpet and really show off the Richmond region to these attendees."

Planning has been underway since Richmond was selected as host, with tourism officials, local governments, and sports organizations working together to manage logistics across dozens of venues.

The region's depth of facilities helped secure the event. From aquatics centers to multipurpose complexes, Richmond offers a wide range of venues capable of supporting a diverse lineup of competitions.

"It's kind of a puzzle," Bonifas said of coordinating schedules and locations. "But it's been great to work with all the venues and coordinate those efforts."

Key partners, including Play Chesterfield and the Henrico Sports and Entertainment Authority, are hosting a significant share of events.



The influx of athletes, families, and spectators is expected to generate a strong economic impact across the region. Hotels, restaurants, and retail businesses are preparing for increased demand. The hospitality industry is excited for the Games to be in the Richmond area, and with 172 hotels, the region can easily accommodate thousands of participants.

"With so many people coming to the Richmond area, they all have to stay somewhere, eat somewhere, and shop," Bonifas said. "It's definitely going to have a significant impact on our hospitality community."

Events like the Commonwealth Games highlight the role of sports tourism in driving local economies, particularly during peak travel seasons.

Organizers are also focused on what happens outside of competition. Between events, visitors are encouraged to explore Richmond's restaurants, outdoor spaces, and cultural attractions.

"At the end of the day, we want to create memories," Bonifas said. "These athletes and their families are looking for things to do outside of competition."

The region's central location within Virginia makes it accessible for competitors statewide, while its mix of urban and outdoor amenities offers broad appeal. Museums and historical sites, along with the cultural amenities give competitors reasons to extend their time in the area. Kings Dominion is always a great option for a fun day after the games are over.

"We have something for everyone," Bonifas said. "No matter what part of town you're in, there's something to experience."

Richmond will host the games under a three-year agreement, giving organizers time to build momentum and refine operations.

For Bonifas and others, the goal extends beyond a single successful event. They see the Games as a chance to strengthen partnerships, grow the region's reputation, and attract future competitions.

"We're really excited to get the chance to host," Bonifas said. "And hopefully this is just the start of a great partnership."