

Generating Economic Opportunities

An Interview with Jennifer Wakefield, APR, President and Chief Executive Officer, Greater Richmond Partnership

EDITORS' NOTE Jennifer Wakefield is the President and Chief Executive Officer for the Greater Richmond Partnership (GRP). She assumed her current role in February 2021 after serving as Interim President and CEO twice, Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President of Marketing for the organization. Prior to joining GRP, Wakefield served as the Vice President of Marketing and Communications for the Orlando Economic Development Commission (now the Orlando Economic Partnership) for 11 years. In addition to her experience in economic development, she has experience in the transportation, utility and financial services industries. She holds the Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) designation, signifying a high level of professional experience, competence and ethical standards. She is a former adjunct communications professor at the University of Central Florida. Wakefield is a member of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) where she serves as the chair of the Marketing Committee, on the IEDC Economic Development Research Practitioners (EDRP) council and has served as a regular speaker at IEDC marketing courses and conferences. She is a member of the American Marketing Association (AMA) and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). In the Richmond Region, she is on the Management Roundtable, the Richmond Federal Reserve Industry Roundtable, University of Richmond Robins School Executive Advisory Council, the City of Richmond Economic Vitality Advisory Committee, the I-64 Innovation Corridor Research Council, the Japan-Virginia Society, and is part of the VCU Advanced Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Cluster Development Program. Wakefield has been named among Top 50 Economic Developers by Consultant Connect, Top 40 Under 40 Economic Development Professionals by Development Counsellors International and International Economic Development Council, and Top 40 Under 40 professionals in Orlando by the Orlando Business Journal. She has won numerous local, regional, national and international awards for her work. She is a 2005 graduate of Leadership Orlando and a 2018 graduate of Lead Virginia. Wakefield has a master's degree in communications from the University of Central Florida and a bachelor's degree in public relations and advertising from the University of West Florida.



Jennifer Wakefield

PARTNERSHIP BRIEF Greater Richmond Partnership, Inc. (grpva.com) is the lead regional economic development organization for the City of Richmond and the counties of Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico in Virginia. GRP impacts the Richmond Region by recruiting companies from all over the globe which provide employment opportunities and taxable capital investment for the local community. GRP offers no-cost site location assistance and other services to domestic

and foreign companies planning new or expanded facilities. It is a single point of contact to the network of private sector and state and local government professionals that support a company's facility location decision. GRP has three main priorities – lead generation, marketing, and research. GRP is organized as a public/private, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation funded jointly by the four local governments and approximately 100 area businesses.

Will you highlight the history and heritage of GRP?

Greater Richmond Partnership started in 1994 as the lead regional economic development organization for the City of Richmond and surrounding counties of Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico in Virginia, but its origin serving our local partners started more than 40 years ago.

Today we are a public/private 501(c)(3) nonprofit that assists companies in choosing Greater Richmond for their next location. A few of our recent announcements include CoStar Group's "little HQ2" which includes a \$453 million investment and 2,000 new jobs, as well as a state-of-the-art Amazon facility which will utilize robotics and employ 1,000 people.

How do you define GRP's mission and purpose?

GRP attracts new companies to the region by providing in-depth market data, marketing the region globally and generating quality economic opportunities. Our mission is to aggressively generate economic opportunities that create quality jobs for residents in the region and increase the tax base for needed community services. Our vision is that Greater Richmond will be the top mid-sized region in the U.S. for companies to invest.

What are the main services that GRP provides?

We offer a multitude of services for companies or consultants looking to expand or relocate to the Richmond region. Our team of experts can assist with confidential project management assistance, site selection assistance, providing key connections to organizations in the region, in-depth market data, resources for incentives, workforce recruitment and training.

How important has it been to have such an engaged and committed board of directors for GRP?

It's critical for any economic development organization to have a committed and engaged board. I'm fortunate that we have a strong coalition of both public and private sector leaders that have been committed to our success since 1994.

How do you define success for GRP's efforts?

Winning more jobs and investment for the region, enhancing awareness of Greater Richmond as a top mid-sized region for business, and moving up lists and rankings will define our success. ●

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