

BID BULLETIN

Riverside Downtown Business Improvement District



OCTOBER 2025

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RDP LUNCHEON

Join us for the RDP luncheon at noon on Tuesday, October 28, 2025 at the Hyatt Place Riverside Downtown catered by Gram's BBQ featuring Sabrina Gonzalez of Civil Rights Institute of Inland Southern California Call the RDP office at 951-781-7335 for reservations



DOWNTOWN IS CALLING

www.RiversideDowntown.org

Fall Events

Tombstone Cinema at Evergreen Memorial Historic Cemetery with Hocus Pocus 2 on October 4th. For more information, visit <https://evergreen-cemetery.info>

The Mary S. Roberts Pet Adoption Center's Barktoberfest will be held on Saturday, October 11th from 1 pm to 4 pm (VIP Entry from Noon to 1 pm) at White Park in Riverside. This is a dog-friendly, fundraising event with the proceeds providing second chances to homeless pets and resources to the community. Animal lovers and craft brew lovers alike will come together to enjoy tastings from some of the best local craft breweries. Visit petsadoption.org for more information.

The 49th Annual Mission Inn Run returns on Sunday, October 19th with a Health and Fitness Expo on Saturday, October 18th. To sign up, participate as a sponsor, vendor or volunteer, or to get more information, go to www.missioninnrun.org. The website also has a map of street closures on October 19th along with times of closures. Downtown Businesses should note that full street closures start at 7 am and continue until 12:30 pm. Visit missioninnmuseum.org for more information.

Doors Open Riverside takes place on Saturday, October 25th from 1 pm to 5 pm at 19 locations within and near downtown. For a full list of participating locations and their tour times (times do vary), please check the website for information: <https://riversideca.gov/DoorsOpen/>.

Supervisor's Message - Celebrating Heritage and Community in Downtown Riverside

Contributed by Supervisor Jose Medina



Downtown Riverside is more than just the center of our city; it is often the first-place visitors experience when they come to Riverside County. It is where businesses, history, and community life

intersect, making it a place of connection for all of us. As your Supervisor for District 1, I am committed to ensuring that downtown remains vibrant, welcoming, and reflective of the heritage that built it.

When I served as a State Assemblymember, I championed investments that have become pillars of our community, funding for The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture, support for the Civil Rights Institute of Inland Southern California, and Harada House. These initiatives were about

more than buildings; they were about creating opportunities and ensuring Riverside thrives for years to come. That same vision continues to guide my work today as your Supervisor.

One of the most exciting steps forward is the Riverside County Park and Open-Space District's approval to purchase land around the historic Trujillo Adobe, one of California's earliest Mexican settlements and a powerful symbol of resilience. The vision is to build a plaza in downtown Riverside, inspired by Old Town San Diego and La Placita in Los Angeles, where families and visitors can connect with the cultural roots of our region.

Bringing this vision to life will take a joint effort. More funding will be needed, and I look forward to working with the City of Riverside and community partners to make it a reality. A project like this not only preserves our history, it also creates new synergy for downtown

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SUPERVISOR'S MESSAGE, *continued from page 1*

businesses, drawing more visitors, strengthening connections, and helping our economy thrive.

Equally important is supporting the wellbeing of our community today. Last month in Mead Valley, my office hosted the Women's Health and Safety Resource Fair, where residents connected with healthcare providers, safety resources, and wellness organizations. Events like these ensure that women and families have access to the tools they need to live safe, healthy lives.



Mayor's Message

Contributed by Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson

What do you think of when you hear the term Artificial Intelligence (AI)? Do you fear a **Terminator**-like future where evil robots replace humans? Or does it get you excited about the possibilities to solve our world's problems, offering unprecedented breakthroughs in creativity and thought? The technology that makes AI so powerful can be unsettling but designed and deployed responsibly can significantly improve our lives. This holds huge potential for the way cities serve our residents.

AI is transforming the way cities around the world operate, including right here in Riverside. This technology is being used for all sorts of city functions like providing better customer service and streamlining city services. AI holds enormous potential to make local government more accessible, responsive, and efficient for the people we serve. Riverside is embracing these tools thoughtfully and responsibly, ensuring that innovation is always paired with accountability and care for our community.

One of the first big steps we've taken is the launch of Rivy, our new AI-powered chatbot on the City's website. Rivy is available 24/7 to answer common questions, connect residents with city services, and provide quick access to information that might have previously required a phone call or in-person visit. You can ask Rivy all sorts of things! You can find out what permits you might need or get details about upcoming community events. Rivy is designed to make life a little easier and save residents valuable time.

But Rivy is just one application. Across city departments, we are actively exploring how AI can improve the way we serve Riverside residents. Some examples include:

- **Public Safety Support:** The Riverside Police Department have begun using AI tools that classify descriptions to help accelerate investigations through the Real Time Crime Center. These tools are not replacing the work of officers but instead giving them better resources to keep our community safe while improving response times. Importantly, these tools are being used with strong oversight and a commitment to transparency.
- **City Operations:** The City is also using AI to make day-to-day operations more efficient. This automation saves hundreds of labor hours every year, speeding up processing and freeing staff to focus on higher-value work instead of repetitive data entry.

When women thrive, the whole community thrives. Heritage and community are inseparable, preserving the past while meeting the needs of the present.

As Supervisor, my goal is to preserve the history that grounds us, support the businesses that drive our economy, and ensure Downtown Riverside remains a place of pride for residents and a welcoming destination for visitors. Together, we can honor our heritage while building a future that reflects the best of District 1.

- **Economic Development:** Riverside's growing reputation as a hub of innovation makes us an attractive place for AI-related companies and startups to invest. By demonstrating that we are forward-thinking, we open new opportunities for jobs, partnerships, and educational pathways for our young people.
- **Community Engagement:** We are also using AI tools to better understand community input. By analyzing survey responses and feedback from residents, we can identify themes and concerns more quickly, ensuring that your voices are at the center of our decisions.

While these developments are exciting, we must proceed cautiously and responsibly. Safeguards for privacy, accuracy, and fairness are built into every AI project we pursue. Our goal is not to replace people, but to empower them with better tools. Technology should always serve humanity, not the other way around.

Riverside has always been a city of innovation. We pioneered California's citrus industry and are currently leading the region and state in sustainability, higher education, and clean energy. Embracing AI is the next step in that proud tradition. With careful planning and community trust, we can ensure that these tools strengthen our city and bring real, tangible benefits to residents.

RDP Welcomes New Businesses to Downtown

- Alival Company (Jewelry)
- Clinmed Updates (Communications)
- Get Linked by Lo (Jewelry)
- Glid Technologies (Transportation)
- Hailey Jackson (Misc. Professional Services)
- LocalShield Insurance Co. (Broker)
- Lorna Reed Business Services LLC
- Lucky Dollar Tattoo Parlor
- Lunavia (Misc. General Services)
- OG Hornets (Sporting)
- Pathways 4 Independence (Business Services)
- Pengu Juice Co.

The Counseling Center For Individual & Family Therapy Inc.

Council Corner

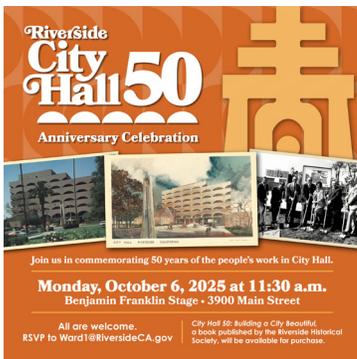
Contributed by Councilmember Philip Falcone



Ward One Council Update Riverside City Hall Turns 50!

The built environment shapes who we are and how we interact with our city and surroundings. Any business or resident in a downtown across this country can see first-hand how historic buildings and urban design decisions from decades ago can still have impacts on our day-to-day

operations. In Riverside the decision to move City Hall from the corner of Mission Inn Avenue and Orange Street to the then nine-year-old Main Street Pedestrian Mall did not come easily. After years of discussion and having outgrown its 1924 facility, the City of Riverside green lit a new municipal headquarters come the late 1960s.



Local architect Herman O. Ruhnau was known for his civic buildings including the Law Library, Riverside City College's Cutter Pool and Cosmetology building, and the Main Street Mall. Ruhnau was asked to design a new City Hall as a southern anchor to the Mall at Tenth and Main Streets—the Raincross Square (Riverside Convention Center)

would later become the northern anchor in 1976.

Ruhnau's design architect E. Kurt Steinmann presented an initial rendering that embraced ultra-modern architectural design principles. Community backlash over the design caused the City Council to direct Ruhnau and Steinmann to go back to the drawing board. They returned with a design that utilized

the architectural styles of New Formalism and Brutalism while implementing modern arched arcades on every floor. The entire building was clad in 999,000 locally sourced brown bricks atop steel framing and concrete-skimmed walls.

An inscription on a postcard of a watercolor rendering of City Hall reads in part, "Its unique design and open office landscaping allows for future expansion and maximum flexibility. The massive brick columns symbolize the strength of the city; the beautifully carved arches, its Spanish and Mexican heritage and the exterior landscaping, the rich quality of its cultural background."

Opening day was Monday, October 6, 1975 with a ceremony full of local, state, and national pride. As Monday, October 6, 2025 marks 50 years to the day that City Hall opened and was dedicated to the people of Riverside, a year-long series of events and programming are planned including the dedication of Riverside City Hall as City of Riverside landmark number 152, which will protect the exterior of the building in perpetuity. As well as the release of a Riverside Historical Society-published book authored by Jennifer Mermilliod and me, with greater depth on City Hall's architectural history and what this building has witnessed over the last five decades.

Tours of the building were popularized in the 1970s and a new series of tours entitled "You and Your City Government" are designed specifically for students in Riverside and will welcome fifty tour groups in one year to teach about local government and Riverside history.

Riverside's seat of municipal government has come a long way since its inception. The physical manifestations of the strength of local government are in both the people and their places. And Riverside's place is ready for the next fifty.

Join us for this celebratory occasion on Monday, October 6, 2025 at 11:30 am at the Benjamin Franklin Stage at Main and 9th Streets.



Ward Two Council Update Happy Autumn Equinox and Fall!

Dia De Los Muertos

Color Run: Everyone is welcome at Riverside's second annual Raincross Color Run on October 25, 2025! This

year, we will be celebrating the Day of the Dead at Hunter Hobby Park. This run/walk event for all ages will include a 3

lap, 2.1-mile course where every participant will get a white t-shirt to be "decorated" at color stations throughout the course. Each finisher will receive a uniquely Riverside, locally designed, Day of the Dead wood medal. The event will include a festival area with themed activities, face painting for the kids,



and local food trucks and vendors. This event will be fun for the whole family limited to 1,000 participants, so sign up early! Scan the QR Code below to sign up today!

Latinx Heritage Month: We celebrate Latinx Heritage Month in September-October to highlight the rich cultures, histories, and contributions of the Latinx community here in Riverside and the Inland Empire. It's a time to honor the resilience, stories, and achievements of Latinx people in all areas of Riverside and beyond—from art and music, to education, politics, and beyond. This month reminds us of the strength found in diversity and the importance of uplifting the voices and stories that have helped shape our nation. I would like to thank CHIRLA, TODEC, & IC4IJ for the work they have been doing to provide help and resources to our community over the course of this year. We see you and are grateful for the role you serve in our communities.

Indigenous People's Month: I would like to take a moment to respectfully acknowledge the original and ongoing caretakers of this land, water, and air—the Cahuilla, Tongva, Luiseño, and Serrano peoples—as well as their ancestors and descendants,
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WARD TWO, continued from page 3

past, present, and future. We recognize their enduring connection to this region and honor their stewardship of the land we now call Riverside. Today, this area is home to a diverse community, and we express our gratitude to the Indigenous peoples whose care for this land laid the foundation for all who live here.

Ofelia Valdez-Yeager Eastside Elementary School:

On Thursday, September 25th, my colleagues and I attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the Ofelia Valdez-Yeager Eastside Elementary School. This is an historic moment for the Eastside community and I am so excited to see the school become a bustling hub for parents and students in this neighborhood.

If you are interested in learning more about any of the projects or events in Ward 2, please call my office at 951-826-5419 or email me at ccervantes@riversideca.gov.

Wishing you a wonderful start to the Fall season and all the changes it brings!

Downtown Business Improvement District

The Board of Directors of the Riverside Downtown Partnership (RDP) approved the Annual Report for the renewal of the Riverside Downtown Parking and Business Improvement District (Downtown BID) levy for the 2026 calendar year at their September 10, 2025 meeting. The report was submitted to the City following the meeting for setting of the Public Hearing. The Public Hearing will be set for December 2, 2025. The City sends out notices to all businesses in the Downtown BID to advise them of the date and time of the public hearing.

Both the Annual Report for the renewal as well as the PowerPoint presentation will be posted on the RDP website on October 15th so businesses can review prior to the public hearing. Go to www.riversidedowntown.org, click on "About RDP" from the dropdown menu, and then "Annual Renewal Report".

The activities of the Downtown BID are funded by the BID levy which is equal to 100% of the annual business tax levied by the City of Riverside and assessed on all businesses within the BID boundaries. No changes in the assessment or boundaries are proposed for 2026.

For more details, please refer to the Annual Report and the PowerPoint presentation. If you have any questions regarding either, or the BID renewal process, please contact Janice Penner at the RDP office at 951-781-7339.

ARTS CORNER Riverside Artswalk

Artist Spotlight: Artist Spotlight: Pável Acevedo

Contributed by Rachael Dzikowski, Executive Director – Riverside Arts Council

Over the last few years, the City of Riverside has been painted – mural after mural decorating the city, emphasizing the city's tagline, "City of Arts & Innovation". This year the Riverside Arts Council started leading the pilot Artists in Residency (AIR) program funded by the City in which the six selected artists will complete two community driven murals in each ward. The murals will not only help prevent tagging and beautify the city but will also build community pride. This month's Artist Spotlight is one of the artists selected for the AIR program to create murals in Wards 1 and 2, and has a mural on display in downtown's Arts & Culture District in the alley on the side of Dragon Marsh and behind The Imperial Hardware Lofts called Riverside Tales.

Pável Acevedo is a transplant from Oaxaca to Riverside, where he opened his print studio and began to offer workshops and create his artwork. He began his education as a self-taught artist on the Oaxacan coast before relocating to Oaxaca City, where he studied under Rufino Tamayo's studio and participated in printmaking and painting workshops. He completed his studies at the Fine Arts School of Oaxaca City. Pável is now a printmaker, muralist and art educator that works between the Inland Empire and Los Angeles, California. As an independent art educator, he's been part of community education programs with non-profit organizations such as I Learn America, Self-Help Graphics and Plaza de la Raza. Pável has showcased his artwork throughout California, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and New York. He has participated in previous art residencies including Self-Help Graphics, KALA Art Institute, Fullerton Community College, Art Share LA, College of the Canyons and Horned Toad Print Shop. Pável's artwork belongs to art collections of The Cheech Center for Chicano Art and Culture, Center for the Study of Political Graphics, the Wignall Contemporary Museum, Mexic-Arte Museum, Museum of El Paso, the Huntington Library, and the Thomas J. Watson Library at the MET. As a muralist, he's been commissioned to create public art in Los Angeles, Rancho Cucamonga and Riverside.

Pável makes his living as a professional artist and so works on his artwork every day. Aside from the actual creation of his work, he also works on the administrative end, investigation, archiving and drawing. He is inspired to create his work by the natural world and our relationship to it, which helps him create stories and commentaries about current times. His artwork is not just his living, but it also helps him to build relationships in the community. Pável has been a part of the arts community for a few years exhibiting his artwork, leading workshops, speaking engagements and creating murals. These experiences have expanded his view of being an artist working in community. His ultimate goal in creating his artistic endeavors is to continue learning and sharing.

This Artswalk stop by to check out Pável's mural, Riverside Tales and keep an ear out for the new murals he will be creating for the AIR program.

For more information about Pável and his artwork, visit @pavel_acevedo on IG. For more information on Riverside Artswalk visit www.riversideartswalk.com or @riversideartswalk on IG.



Business Spotlight is Back!

Gram's BBQ: A Riverside Legacy Served with Love



In the heart of downtown Riverside, Gram's BBQ Restaurant & Catering stands as more than just a beloved eatery—it's a living tribute to family, flavor, and community. Founded in 1987 by Robert Bratton and named after his

mother, Josie "Gram" Bratton, the restaurant was born from a dream: to share authentic Southern barbecue with the city he loved. Today, that dream lives on through his daughter, Benita Bratton, who leads Gram's as owner, operator, and pitmaster.

Benita's leadership blends tradition with innovation. From slow-smoked ribs and juicy brisket to vibrant community events and creative branding, she's infused Gram's with a spirit that's both soulful and forward-thinking. One of the most beloved menu highlights is the stand-out fried catfish—crispy, golden, and seasoned to perfection—especially popular during the weekly Fish Friday specials that draw regulars and newcomers alike. And with Thursday college student discounts, Benita ensures that Gram's remains accessible and invites Riverside's younger crowd, creating a space where everyone feels at home.

Beyond the dining room, Gram's BBQ has become a trusted name in catering—bringing Southern flavor and hospitality to events across the Inland Empire. Whether it's a wedding, corporate luncheon, family reunion, or community festival, Benita's

expert catering team delivers unforgettable meals with seamless service and signature warmth. Each menu is thoughtfully customized to suit the occasion, featuring crowd favorites like brisket, ribs, pulled pork, chicken, and soulful sides. With flexible packages, full-service setup, and a reputation for reliability, Gram's Catering makes it easy for hosts to impress their guests and enjoy the moment.

Gram's BBQ is known for its award-winning sauce, soulful sides, and a menu that honors Southern roots while embracing Riverside's vibrant energy. But what truly sets it apart is the atmosphere: warm, welcoming, and filled with stories. Whether you're grabbing lunch on Main Street or booking catering for a celebration, you're treated like family.

Benita's commitment to community shines just as brightly as her culinary expertise. From hosting local events to spotlighting her dedicated team, she ensures Gram's BBQ remains a place where people gather, connect, and feel at home.

As Riverside continues to grow, Gram's BBQ remains a cherished cornerstone—serving up comfort, culture, and a whole lot of love. Stop by, say hello, and taste the legacy. And if you're planning an event, let Gram's Catering turn your gathering into something truly special.

*Gram's BBQ 3527 Main Street, Riverside
Phone: 951-782-8219 Website: <https://www.gramsbq.com/>*

BUSINESS BUZZ

Instagram Best Practices to Grow Your Brand and Engagement *by Kiely Kuligowski*

Follow these Instagram best practices to improve engagement and grow your following.

Top 10 Instagram Tips

To have a successful and engaging Instagram presence, you have to do more than consistently post a few pictures. However, with the right tools and best practices, you can decipher Instagram's algorithms and improve your return on investment.

"Instagram offers small businesses an accessible way to build a brand, reach potential customers and drive conversions," said Sarah Remesch, digital and social media marketing expert and founder of 270M. "It is especially well suited for small businesses because it allows them to visually showcase their products and services and tell their story in a similar fashion as a micro-site would."

Follow these best practices to set your brand up for success on Instagram.

Top 10 Instagram Tips

1. Optimize your profile for search and discovery

Optimizing your Instagram profile for search and discovery is foundational for building an engaged audience. Start by selecting a username and account name that are clear, memorable, and rich with industry-relevant keywords. This increases your discoverability in both Instagram's in-app searches and external search engines.

Business accounts should always complete their bios by including accurate contact information and activating action buttons like "Book Now" or "Order Food" to encourage user interactions. Additionally, enabling profile visibility settings allows Instagram to recommend your account to users with related interests, giving you greater organic exposure.

"SEO can be applied by including important keywords in your username, display name, bio and caption copy," Remesch said. "Captions are also one of the best places to authentically include keywords. This not only helps Instagram understand what your post is about, which can affect where and how it is shown, but it also drives further reach to the audience who you are targeting."

2. Post at peak engagement times

When it comes to posting at peak engagement times, rely on the latest data to maximize impact. Research indicates that weekdays between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., especially on Mondays through Thursdays, according to Sprout Social. Posting early in the morning can also be effective due to lower competition and early user activity. Research from Later.com suggests some brands may benefit from posting between 3 am and 6 am.

Establishing a consistent posting schedule tailored to these findings helps solidify your visibility to both followers and Instagram's algorithm, which boosts overall reach and engagement.

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BUSINESS BUZZ, continued from page 5

Peak engagement windows vary by industry, so it's vital to consult your Instagram Insights to discover when your particular followers are most active.

Industry	Peak Instagram Engagement Times
Retail	Mondays at 11 am and 1 – 3 pm
Education	Wednesdays from 10 am to 5 pm
Food & Beverage	Mondays through Thursdays between 11 am and 2 pm

Source: Sprout Social

Establishing a consistent posting schedule tailored to these findings helps solidify your visibility to both followers and Instagram's algorithm, which boosts overall reach and engagement. "Consistent posting is important because it helps businesses remain visible to their audience and signals to the algorithm that the profile is active while keeping the brand appearing in-feed regularly," Remesch said. "However, posting frequency and cadence should be determined based on content performance data."

Keep a close eye on Instagram Insights or your own analytics for times when your engagement seems highest, and aim for those times.

3. Use Instagram Stories and Reels strategically

Using Instagram Stories and Reels strategically is essential for expanding your brand's reach. Stories are perfect for sharing behind-the-scenes moments, product launches or day-to-day updates using interactive elements like polls and quizzes to drive audience participation. Stories live on your profile for only 24 hours and can include photos or video clips with music, text, GIFs or stickers layered on. Try livestreaming company events or doing employee takeovers for a day.

Reels, meanwhile, excel with short, entertaining or educational videos – especially when paired with trending audio. Instagram Reels provide entertaining short videos that can be funny, inspiring and educational. You can increase your reel's visibility by using high-quality audio or music, keeping it under 10 seconds, adding the reel to your website, including relevant hashtags and scheduling your posts for when your followers are online.

To maximize the reach of Stories and Reels, always use location tags, mentions and interactive features. Keep video quality high so your content stands out and appears professional, as well. Avoid adding too much text and low quality audio to keep your audience engaged.

4. Write captions that drive action

Effective caption writing is one of the most impactful ways to drive user action. Begin captions with a compelling hook, such as a question, surprising statistic or bold statement. Follow this with a concise story or message that adds brand personality and context. Close each caption with a clear and engaging call-to-action, such as encouraging users to comment, share, save or visit your website.

Integrate relevant keywords within your captions, both for discoverability and to help AI-driven features accurately index your posts. More specific hashtags or keywords will help your posts appear to consumers when they talk to Meta AI. Users can ask

Meta AI to show them relevant posts on any topic and if the subject matter relates to your brand, you'll appear closer to the top of their search results.

Above all, ensure your writing style and tone remain authentic and in alignment with your brand to foster trust and meaningful connections. Focus on telling a better business story through images, video and text, and seek connections with your audience. Be memorable. When followers feel an emotional connection to your content, they are more likely to engage and become a faithful social media audience.

5. Master the hashtag game

Limit your hashtag count to three to five targeted options per post, combining popular general tags, niche industry keywords and branded hashtags that represent your business. While Instagram allows up to 30 hashtags on a standard post, a wall of hashtags under your posts can look desperate and unprofessional.

Comprehensive keyword research using tools like Metricool or SEMrush is essential for discovering trending and relevant hashtags. Benchmark your choices against competitors and top-performing industry accounts, updating your hashtag sets as trends evolve. Hashtags can make the difference between your post rising to the top of a feed and being buried in a sea of other posts, so it's important to learn which ones work for you and your brand. Overly generic or popular hashtags, like #holiday and #fashion, can send your posts into oblivion, as they will compete with millions of other posts. Instead, use industry- or brand-specific hashtags that are easy for users to find and help your content stand out.

In the past, Instagram users were able to follow hashtags, but this feature was done away with in 2024. While hashtags may play a diminished role in organic discovery compared to prior years, they are still valuable for organizing content and improving searchability, so choose them wisely and monitor their performance regularly.

Instagram recommends that you use less than five hashtags per post. Using more can lead to decreased engagement as a Statista report showed, with posts displaying 17 or 18 hashtags getting the smallest amount of engagement.

6. Engage authentically in comments and DMs

Authentic engagement in comments and direct messages remains crucial for building trust with your audience. One of the best ways to build engagement on your posts is to be engaged yourself. Respond to customers' comments as much as possible. This will help build your credibility by showing that you care about what your customers have to say and that you are using social media for a good reason.

"Comments are the front porch of your brand, so show up, say hello and be a real human," said Jaci Lund, founder and creative director at Treebird Branding. "This is where relationships start."

Promptly responding to comments and DMs each day signals that your brand values community feedback. Take care to personalize your responses, referencing specific details or using first names when appropriate. Stick to your branding guidelines to maintain a consistent voice.

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Proactively starting group conversations, tagging relevant users and showing appreciation for constructive input can further strengthen your brand relationships. While Meta AI offers tools for suggested replies and moderation, ensure all interactions maintain a human touch and reflect your brand's established voice. If you're unsure of how to respond to comments, you can use Meta AI, which provides advice on what to say. You can even tag Meta AI in private or group chats for it to chime in.

7. Track metrics that matter

Tracking the metrics that matter is the backbone of any effective Instagram strategy. Using tools like Instagram Insights and your Professional Dashboard, focus on analyzing engagement rate metrics such as likes, comments, shares, saves per follower, and overall reach.

Businesses should prioritize monitoring story and reel views, follower demographics and growth, and the volume of website traffic generated by Instagram links. Consult industry benchmarks regularly to evaluate your performance. The table below shows Instagram engagement rates by industry based on data compiled by Hootsuite.

Industry	Instagram Engagement Rate
Consumer goods & retail	1.8%
Dining, hospitality, tourism	1.9%
Finance	1.8%
Government	3.2%
Healthcare, pharma, biotech	1.6%
Construction and manufacturing	2.8%
Media & entertainment	2%
Real estate/legal/prof. services	2.9%

You can also create an Instagram business profile with different features than a personal account. You can include business information, such as a phone number and address in your bio; add a Contact button to your profile; utilize story highlights and covers; and access Instagram Insights, a tool that provides detailed analytics about your followers and engagement rates.

8. Collaborate with influencers and creators

When collaborating with influencers and creators, prioritize partnering with micro-influencers who maintain engaged, high-quality followings within your niche or geographic area. If you are considering Instagram marketing with influencers, it's important to consider whom to work with very carefully. No two influencers are the same, and each comes with its own unique audience and areas of expertise.

"The influencer bubble is popping," Lund said. "Trust is eroding because followers know most endorsements are paid. Instead, we recommend building real relationships with micro-influencers, especially ones with local or niche followings. They create more authentic content and drive higher-quality engagement."

Scrutinize an influencer's engagement authenticity — real interactions often matter more than large, unaffiliated follower counts. Set clear campaign goals and maintain transparency about sponsorships and expectations. Building ongoing,

mutually beneficial relationships with creators is more effective and trustworthy than executing one-off campaigns.

Users gravitate toward organic content more than paid content, so make sure to maintain a balance. While users expect a brand to do some advertising and paid endorsements, it's important your Instagram presence looks like more than just one big advertisement.

9. Utilize Instagram shopping features

Instagram's evolving shopping features create new opportunities for direct sales and customer conversions. Businesses should fully set up their Instagram Shop with accurate product listings and rich media tags to enable seamless purchases from posts, Stories and Reels. You can also add action buttons that allow you to engage consumers through services such as ordering food or making an appointment directly on Instagram.

Utilize videos, carousels and live demos to highlight products, and incorporate "Shop Now" or "Book" action buttons to simplify the buyer journey. With Instagram's advertising program, you can create campaigns to attract users at all sales funnel stages as part of your Instagram marketing strategy.

10. Refresh content forms regularly

Keeping your content formats fresh and dynamic is key in today's crowded social media landscape. A major Instagram faux pas is sharing multiple photos as individual posts one after the other. Instead, share them in a single post using the carousel feature. Instagram increased the Carousel post limit to 20 photos in a single post in 2024, but don't expect followers to scroll through 20 images either.

Rotate between carousels, single-image posts, Reels and Stories to retain audience interest and stand out in feeds. Take advantage of newer aspect ratios and visual layout updates for your grid, and test multiple formats to determine what drives the most engagement with your followers. Consider varying your posting style. Try a Reel, Story or how-to post to keep your followers entertained and increase your chances of reaching new leads.

Keep the 50-30-20 framework in mind when posting on Instagram, so you offer consumers a diverse range of content. This involves posting 50 percent informative or educational content, 30 percent engagement content and 20 percent connection content.

Regularly feature user-generated content, testimonials and customer stories to boost authenticity and cultivate community. User-generated content creates an engagement opportunity for users, reduces costs for your business and shows users that your brand listens to and values customers.

Try creating a branded hashtag that followers can use to submit content, then repost applicable and appropriate content to your business page for all to see. Some great examples of user-generated marketing campaigns are Starbucks' #RedCupContest and Coca-Cola's #ShareACoke campaign. Just make sure to closely follow Meta's Community Guidelines because Instagram's AI moderation features will automatically remove anything that goes against these rules.

<https://www.business.com/articles/instagram-best-practices/>.



**RIVERSIDE
DOWNTOWN
PARTNERSHIP**

DOWNTOWN IS CALLING

www.RiversideDowntown.org

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*Office Manager/
Bookkeeper*
Shirley Schmeltz

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