



## ANNUAL REPORT

# 2024





# CEO'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Thank you for taking the time to read our 2024 Annual Report. You will find that Venice MainStreet continues to bring exciting events, vibrant marketing, tempting promotions, affective advocacy, and much more to Venice and our surrounding areas. We have seen increased attendance at events, active participants in our partnership program, and successful programs from our local nonprofits throughout the year. The staff and myself love working with each and everyone of you to accomplish goals that make Venice an even better place to be. As we launch into 2025, we anticipate another great year ahead. We hope to advance in our strategic plan by expanding our boundaries, diversifying and increasing our revenue, allowing us to provide our partners and the public with even more opportunities!



- Kara Morgan, CEO Venice MainStreet

## MISSION

Venice MainStreet, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to preserving and enhancing the character, beauty, and economic vitality of historic downtown Venice and surrounding areas.

**Vision:** To enhance the vibrant Venice community by bringing activities, cultural connections, and regional and national interest to Venice through advocacy, partnerships, and volunteerism.

## STAFF

**Kara Morgan, Chief Executive Officer**

Michelle Harm, Community Engagement Coordinator

Bekah Horsley, Marketing Coordinator

Lysa Locke, Events Coordinator (2024); Holly Harper, Events Coordinator (2025)





# 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS



**President**  
**James Haas**  
Twist Boutique  
and SunBug



**Vice Pres. & Treasurer**  
**Becky Leake**  
Crews Bank & Trust



**Secretary**  
**Laurie Sparr**  
Sarasota Memorial Hospital  
Venice Campus

### ECONOMIC VITALITY

**Becky Leake, Chair**

Doug Blaire

Andrew Britton

Ronnie Fernandez

James Haas

Nick Pachota

Jean Trammell



**Andrew Britton**  
Britton Law Group



**Kim Farrell**  
Fox Lea Farm, Inc.



**Helen Moore**  
Michael Saunders & Co.

### DESIGN

**Norhala Houck, Co-Chair**

**Jean Trammell, Co-Chair**

John Collier

Christie Nuttall

Aimee Odette



**Hector Pescio**  
Made in Italy



**Tracy Silver**  
Venice Wine & Coffee Co.



**Annetta Smith**  
FifthThird Bank



**Angela Balsinger Snyder**  
First International Title  
Venice Office

### PUBLIC RELATIONS

**Laurie Sparr, Chair**

Sandra DiPentima

James Haas

Bekah Horsley

Becky Leake

Blair Marrow

Helen Moore

Jean Trammell

# OUR FOCUS



## ECONOMIC VITALITY COMMITTEE

Focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

## MARKETING COMMITTEE

Positions the downtown commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.

## DESIGN COMMITTEE

Supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.

## ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE

Involves creating a strong foundation for maintaining a sustainably revitalized district, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for downtown.

## A TARGETED APPROACH

**Advocacy**- Ensuring downtown is a priority

**Marketing**- Putting downtown on the map

**Real Estate**- Promoting available commercial spaces in district

**Business**- Empowering small businesses and entrepreneurs

**Communications**- Delivering district news and updates

**Placemaking**- Creating a sensory experience of downtown

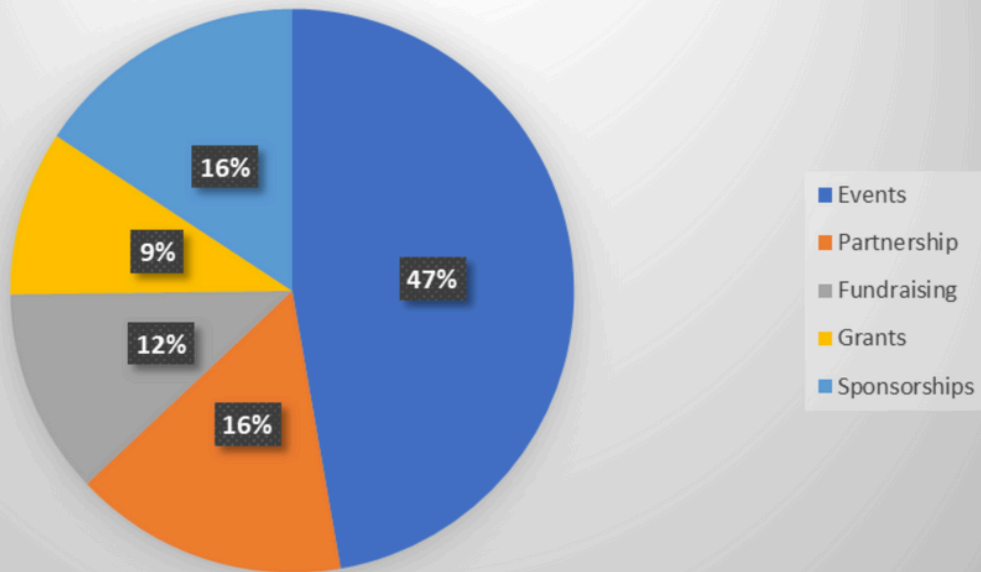
**Partnerships**- Establishing critical stakeholder relationships

**Events**- Hosting signature events and collaborating with other nonprofits

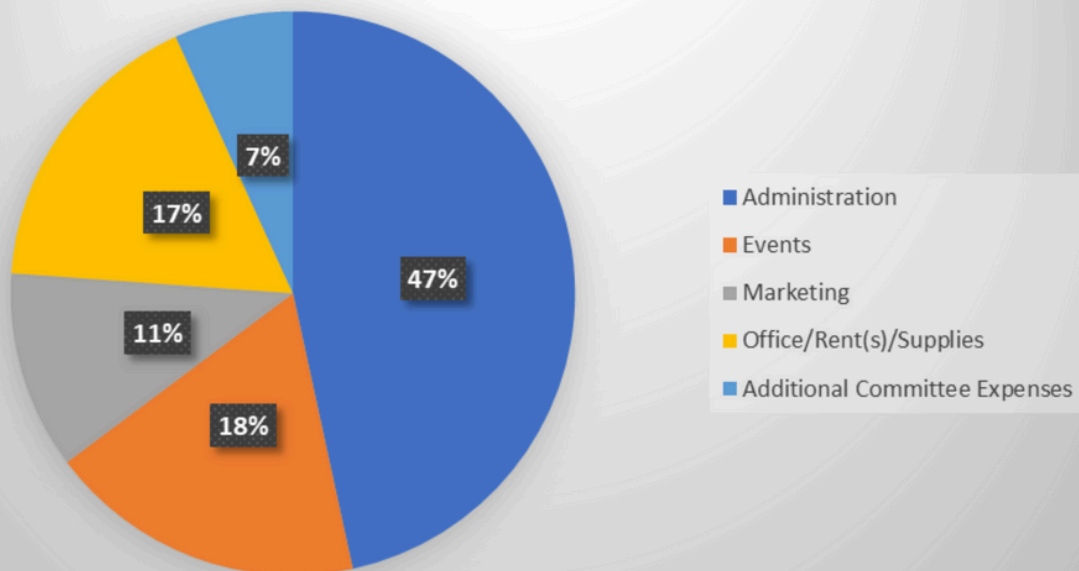


# 2024 Financials

Income 2024 \$288,000



Expenses 2024 \$288,000



# OUR 44 SIGNATURE EVENTS

## 23 Venice MainStreet Signature Events

- **Movies in the Park** in partnership with VIPA, Abominable, January 10
- **16th Annual Downtown Venice Craft Festival**, in partnership with Howard Alan Events, January 27-28
- **Chocolate Walk**, February 8
- **Mardi Gras**, February 13
- **Movies in the Park** in partnership with VIPA, Beauty & the Beast, February 14
- **23rd Annual Downtown Venice Art Classic**, in partnership with Howard Alan Events, March 2-3
- **Movies in the Park** in partnership with VIPA, Enchanted, March 13
- **Eggstravaganza** in partnership with Lions Club of Venice, March 30
- **Movies in the Park** in partnership with VIPA, Mary Poppins, April 10
- **Sharks Tooth Festival**, April 13-14
- **Wine Walk**, April 25
- **“Tasting Away Again in Venice”** cocktail challenge at 10 participating restaurants, May 1-31
- **Spring Sidewalk Sale**, May 17-18
- **31st Annual Downtown Venice Craft Festival** in partnership with Howard Alan Events, June 15-16
- **Christmas in July**, July 12-13
- **Wine Walk**, August 15
- **15th Annual Labor Day Weekend Venice Craft Festival** in partnership with Howard Alan Events, August 31- September 1
- **“Vodka Puts Me in Good Spirits”** cocktail promotion at 12 participating restaurants, Oct. 7-Nov. 10
- **Halloween Strut** in partnership with Lions Club of Venice, October 31
- **36th Annual Downtown Venice Art Festival** in partnership with Howard Alan Events, Nov. 2-3
- **The Mayor’s Hometown Christmas**, Nov. 29
- **Christmas Walk**, Dec. 5
- **Movies in the Park** in partnership with VIPA, The Santa Clause, Dec. 6

## 21 Friday Night Gazebo Concerts

- January 12 - Robert Garcia
- January 26 - Rising Vibes
- February 9- The Seamus McCarthy Band
- February 23- Bridget Phillips
- March 8- Brown Campbell Blues Band
- March 22- canceled due to weather; rescheduled for November 1
- April 26- Harbor Drive
- May 10- Latitude 26
- May 24- Ryan Judy Music
- June 14- Ken Wanovich
- June 28- Nick Fiasco
- July 12- The Dance Raid
- July 26- Jane Bond
- August 9- Steve Haines
- August 23- Zach Regan & The 776
- September 13- Roger Bash & Forrest Shafer
- September 27- canceled due to weather
- October 11- canceled due to weather
- October 25- Rick Chapman
- November 1- Patchouli & Terra Guitarra (rescheduled date)
- November 8- Tiki Vibe
- November 22- Swinging Bridge
- December 13- Ken Wanovich
- December 27- Doug Burns



# 140,000+

Estimated 2024 downtown attendance  
at Venice MainStreet events



# 2024 ECONOMIC VITALITY

## EV COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

The 2024 committee worked to accomplish the goals of the 2024-2026 Strategic Plan. The committee tackled our first goal to grow and expand our physical boundaries.

First, the committee worked to understand what the potential growth locations throughout the City of Venice were. The research resulted in seven new opportunities for MainStreet to expand its geographical area and its marketing efforts.

Three focus areas were picked for 2024. The committee presented a motion to the Board of Directors, which included three major changes:

(1) A new policy for **marketing beaches, parks, trails, and green spaces** was adopted as a priority area for MainStreet's mission. All green spaces listed will be included in marketing efforts regardless of being listed in the district.

(2) Venice MainStreet will market and promote the **"Cultural Corridor,"** an area that runs down Nokomis Avenue from the Venice Theatre to the Venice Art Center, to reinforce the arts and cultural offerings in Venice. It will be a destination inside a destination.

(3) Lastly, the **Seaboard District**, as it relates to the City of Venice's strategic plan. This district is slated for redevelopment, so staff and committee members are paying close attention to changes and developments with this project. Kara Morgan served on the key stakeholders committee for the redevelopment and staff participated in a three-day Design Charrette for reimagining the Seaboard area (July 31- August 2).



**Becky Leake, Chair**

Doug Blaire

Andrew Britton

Ronnie Fernandez

James Haas

Nick Pachota

Jean Trammell

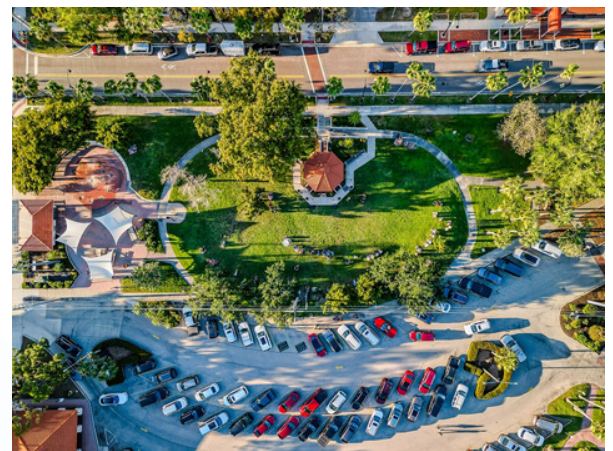


Photo credit: Kram Kran Photo



**City of Venice Design Charrette**

Photo credit: City of Venice

# 2024 PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE



**Laurie Sparr, Chair**

Sandra DiPentima

James Haas

Bekah Horsley

Becky Leake

Blair Marrow

Helen Moore

Jean Trammell



Downtown digital kiosk installed

## PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITY

In alignment with the new strategic plan, the Marketing Committee took the new role of Public Relations Committee to accomplish the priority area of **strengthening our brand and identity** to build revenue. The committee/task force was created in early 2024.

Committee members created a **Public Relations Plan** that integrates with strategic priorities. The plan was presented and adopted by the Board of Directors in September.

The plan also consists of a recommended timeline for rollout of public relations activities, as well as **future fundraising** to hire a PR professional to join the staff at Venice MainStreet.

The committee ended its year with the installation of the **new digital kiosk** (shown above) in partnership with the City of Venice.



# 2024 MARKETING

## STAFF ACTIVITIES

- **ShopVeniceFL.com** efforts included 12 e-blasts, 25 product showcases, holiday countdown campaign, and 447 items sold through the ecommerce site.
- Created two **new restaurant cocktail competition promotions**, designed t-shirts and generated video content for “Tasting Away Again in Venice” and “Vodka Puts Me in Good Spirits” at 12 partner restaurant locations.
- Highlighted 7 downtown Business Partners and upcoming events on ABC7's **Suncoast View television segments** airing on January 23 (SunBug, Twist Boutique), April 25 (San Marco of Venice), May 24 (Seed and Bean Market), July 10 (Krystyna's Designs, Venice Olive Oil Company and Lisa's Classic Rose).
- Published **52 e-newsletters** sharing information about events and partner announcements. From January to December, subscribers increased from 13,798 to 14,561; average open rate was 61%. A major purge of subscribers with zero open rate for one year were deleted in order to improve the overall open rate percentage.
- Posted **72 news blogs** on VisitVeniceFL.org announcing new partners, events, downtown news and other Venice MainStreet activities.
- Posted **5,108 community events** on VisitVeniceFL.org's 2024 monthly calendar (includes concerts, theatre shows, tours, exhibits, classes, workshops, grand openings, club meetings, fundraising events, and other special events of partners).
- Created content for **24 full pages in the Venice Gondolier and Sun Weekly** highlighting the downtown district, events and partners (published bi-monthly).
- Created **64-page printed Venice MainStreet Directory** for distribution throughout Sarasota County (15,000 copies).
- Coordinated digital advertising opportunity in the baggage claim area of **Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport** for participating partners.
- Managed event promotions and messaging on downtown **LED gateway arch sign**.
- Coordinated **Downtown Ambassadors volunteer program** with 70+ volunteers, **Centennial Park Information Kiosk** event postings and distribution of printed materials.
- **Continued sales** of engraved commemorative bricks, art festival posters and t-shirts.



ShopVeniceFL.com ad example



Produced 64-page  
Downtown Directory



Coordinated 7 downtown Business Partners to be featured  
on the Suncoast View on ABC7 for 4 air dates in 2024.

# SOCIAL MEDIA & MARKETING REACH



203K interactions for Historic  
Downtown Venice, FL on  
Google My Business



140K users on  
VisitVeniceFL.org



14.5K e-newsletter subscribers



25K followers



18,000 subscribers receiving  
full page Venice MainStreet  
advertisements in Venice  
Gondolier



10,000 daily motorists viewing  
the digital gateway arch sign



# 2024 DESIGN COMMITTEE

## DOWNTOWN DESIGN ACTIVITIES

- Installed **Memorial Day flags** downtown in partnership with volunteer students from Venice Middle School's Young Marines.
- Held the **holiday window decorating workshop** on May 21.
- Held Call to Artists and judged **2024 Venice Art Festival "Love Venice" poster contest**. James Selcke and Maryana Roshchupka (student) were the chosen winners.
- Held downtown **Holiday Window Decorating Contest "Holiday Harmonies"** and awarded 5 winners.
- Selected 2024 **District Design Award** winners.



**Norhala Houck, Co-Chair** (above)

**Jean Trammell, Co-Chair**

John Collier

Christie Nuttall

Aimee Odette

## 2024 DISTRICT DESIGN AWARD WINNERS



**City of Venice**, public restroom renovation in Centennial Park, 200 West Venice Avenue



**Harbor Bistro & Lounge**, facade improvement, 125 Harbor Drive South



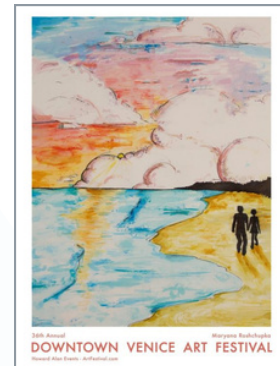
**The Island Bookshop**, interior expansion, 206 Miami Avenue West



**The Venice Company**, Johnson-Schoolcraft Building facade improvement, 201 West Venice Avenue



Held holiday window decorating contest and awarded 5 winners. First Place Sunbug shown above.



Held 36th Annual Downtown Venice Art Festival poster contest. Thank you to Aimee Odette and Michael Rank of Collectors Gallery & Framery for hosting and framing.

# OTHER PROJECTS, PARTNERSHIPS & OUTREACH

- Participated in **Venice Area Chamber of Commerce's Non-profit Rally** on January 19 to share information about volunteering with our organization.
- Held our **Annual Meeting** for our volunteers, donors and Community Partners on January 24.
- Attended **The Patterson Foundation's Thrive and Dine** presentation for ShopVeniceFL.com on January 29.
- Hosted Venice Area Chamber of Commerce's **Business Connections** event, in partnership with City of Venice, at City Hall on February 15.
- Judged AACA Venice Region Annual Car Show, **Venice MainStreet Award**, March 24.
- Participated in the **Giving Challenge** by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County from April 9-10; 70 donors, in combination with a 1:1 match with The Patterson Foundation, contributed \$10,750 in donations.
- Participated in **Sarasota Marketing & Sales Hospitality Alliance** established to bring a group of 12-15 seasoned, owners, operators, and senior-level professionals together every 6-8 weeks to discuss important issues and trends in and across the Sarasota/Manatee County hospitality industry (June 12, August 14, Oct 23, December 11).
- Connected partners with **SERT team from USF's Florida Small Business Development Center (SBDC)** to provide information about how to apply for Hurricane Helene and Milton loans, such as the SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), SBA Physical Disaster Loan and Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program (October 18).
- CEO Kara Morgan presented **5 outreach presentations** to local service organizations such as Women's Sertoma, Women's Inspirational Network, and Venice-Nokomis Woman's Club.
- CEO Kara Morgan served on the **Board of Directors of Visit Sarasota County** maintaining relationships and connections to the broader Sarasota County area.
- Assisted the City of Venice with its annual **Venice Holiday Parade** by providing logistical support, volunteers and emceeing the event on November 30.
- Partnered with the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce for the **Buying Local Pays Back** promotion from November 15 to December 13.





# THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

## PLATINUM



## SILVER



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



FRIDAY NIGHT CONCERT  
SERIES SPONSOR





# THANK YOU 2024 VOLUNTEERS

## Special thanks to:

**Mary Kay Heitman**, Flyer Distributor  
**Tracy Ivey**, Kiosk Event Postings Manager  
**Chuck Jackson**, Handyman Extraordinaire  
**Linda Nelson**, Walker Coordinator  
**Melinda Schell**, Kiosk Volunteer Coordinator



**70+ DOWNTOWN  
AMBASSADORS &  
EVENT VOLUNTEERS**

**259**

**DOWNTOWN  
WALKER HOURS**

**525**

**DOWNTOWN  
KIOSK HOURS**





# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS & 2024-25 RENEWING COMMUNITY PARTNERS

## SILVER SPONSORS

James & Donna Bolt  
Janis Fawn

## INVESTOR LEVEL

Beth & Jack Gehring  
Jamie Henry  
Larry & Tracy Ivey  
Linda Lewis  
Nick & Kate Pachota  
Nancy & Gary Prior  
The Caterpillar Foundation

## PATRON LEVEL

Helen Dennis  
William & Lauren Ginand  
Mike & Addy Griffith  
Jo Gruenwald  
Pamela Morris  
Vinita Ramsay  
Craig & Mary Jo Rivaldo  
Tom Voigt  
& Our Anonymous Patrons

## SUSTAINER LEVEL

Jim & Dawn Backus  
Jane Diles  
Tammy & Phil Heller  
Mark & Irene Infanti  
Philip & Dorothy Korwek  
Gene & Cindy Lodge  
Robin & Mike McFarren  
& Our Anonymous Sustainers

## SUPPORTER LEVEL

Tricia Babcock  
Carolyn Berger  
Marty Damon  
Norma Dayton  
Ruth Ann Dearybury  
Judy Ann DeLucia  
Mary Evans  
Lorraine Finizio  
Michael Given  
Chris & Gregg Hassler  
Virginia Hurney  
Blair K. Morrow  
Kathy Sass  
Paul Weldon  
Aaron Willoughby  
& Our Anonymous Supporters

## DONORS

Kathy Bilek  
Burgundy Management  
Christine Dear  
Fox Lea Farm  
Jo Gruenwald  
Gary Janis  
The Patterson  
Foundation  
&  
Giving Challenge donors!

**YOUR  
INVESTMENT  
KEEPS  
VENICE  
VIBRANT!**

# THANK YOU 2024-25 PARTNERS

## 207

### BUSINESS PARTNERS

**9 NEW NP PARTNERS**  
**THANK YOU FOR JOINING**  
**THIS YEAR!**

#### NONPROFITS:

Bay Point Church Bargain Center  
Coastal Community Church  
Florida Conservation Group  
Laurel Civic Association  
Moms Incredible  
Sarasota County Croquet Club  
St. Mark's Episcopal Church  
Venice Area Audubon Society  
Venice Coin & Currency Club

## 83

### NONPROFIT PARTNERS



**38 NEW BIZ PARTNERS**  
**THANK YOU FOR JOINING THIS YEAR!**

#### BUSINESSES:

3 Bridges Brewing  
Abode  
ArchWell Health  
Art Caffe  
Blackbeard's Table  
Black Label Mobile Food Trailers & Catering  
BLUSH Boot Camp Nokomis  
Body Mind Abundance  
Certified HomeWatch  
Daisy Does It Events  
Dynasty Dance Clubs Venice  
Earth Treasures (new ownership)  
First International Title  
Food + Beer  
Golden Beach Painting  
Hallmark Business Brokers  
Harbor Bistro & Lounge  
Life Family Chiropractic of Venice  
Lost Girl Prairie  
Maris Pointe  
Melange Fashions  
Mike & Mike Services  
Modern Creations Hair Salon  
Nancy's Concierge Services  
Plant Soul Food Kitchen  
Qmunity Global Kitchen  
Render Legacy Trail  
Seven Coffee & Pastries  
SlimFit Weight Loss Wellness Center  
Sounds of Sinatra & More  
Strickland Ranch  
Sunny's Kitchen Delights  
The Daily Paleta  
The Dawg Pound  
The Joe Factor Furniture and More  
Timeless Beauty Studio  
Venice Cooling, Heating & Plumbing  
Venice Island Vibes  
Venice Stationers (new ownership)



# WE APPRECIATE YOU!



Thank you to the **City of Venice** staff, City Council Members and Mayor for your support of Venice MainStreet's events and efforts this year. Special thanks to the following:

**Lorraine Anderson**, Public Information Officer  
**Ashlee Castle**, Asst. Dir. Public Works  
**James Clinch**, Assistant City Manager  
**Ed Lavallee**, City Manager  
**Brianne Lorenz**, Special Events & Marketing  
**Tony Rosen**, Electrical Maintenance Technician  
**Ricky Simpson**, Director of Public Works  
**Lt. Louis White & VPD** for special events

## Public Works Department



Thank you, Patricia Matero, Skip Petitt and Phil Young for installing 11 commemorative bricks!



Thank you for installing the Christmas tree platform!

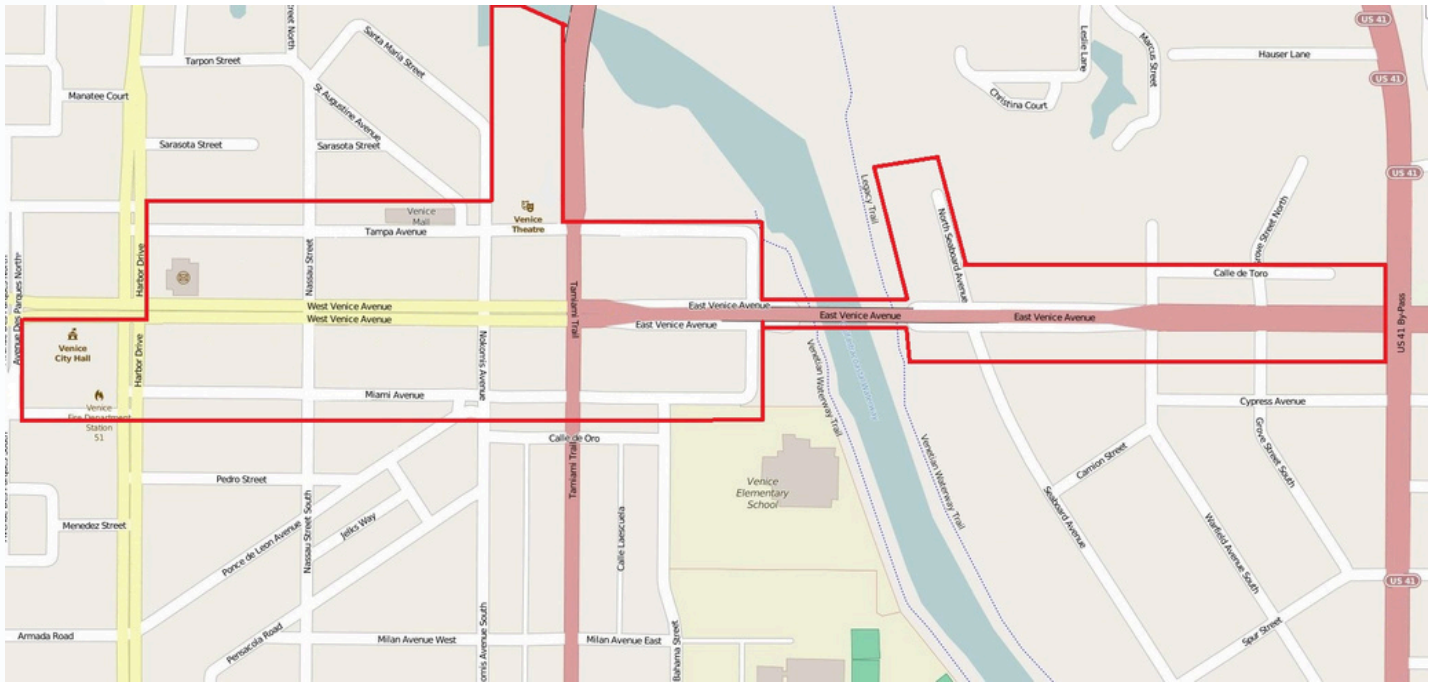
## THANKS FOR THE EXTRA HELP AT OUR EVENTS!

Crews Bank & Trust  
Get It Gone  
Venice Area Chamber of Commerce  
Venice Lions Club  
Venice-Nokomis Rotary  
Venice-Nokomis Woman's Club  
Venice Warehouse  
Young Marines



The KVB Team and The Bloom Team's plants, flowers and sculptures keep our downtown beautiful!

# SUPPORT OUR HISTORIC DISTRICT



To learn more about volunteering, joining or donating to Venice MainStreet, please go to [VisitVeniceFL.org](http://VisitVeniceFL.org)

To download this annual report go to [VisitVeniceFL.org/staff-and-board-of-directors/](http://VisitVeniceFL.org/staff-and-board-of-directors/)

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