

● ANNUAL REPORT



2024

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



DESIGNXRI

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02 About DESIGNxRI

03 Our People

04 A Note from Staff

05 Impact at a Glance

06 Our 2024 Events

DESIGN WEEK RI 2024, Creative Conversations

10 DESIGNxReDEFINE

11 Our 2024 Programs

The Design Catalyst Program, The DxRI Launch Program

16 RIMiAD

18 Financial Highlights

19 Our Supporters

20 2024 Grant and Foundation Support

“

IT'S LIKE
OXYGEN. I
COME AWAY
FEELING
INSPIRED AND
LUCKY TO BE IN
THE PROXIMITY
OF CREATIVE
PEOPLE.

Creative Conversations
Attendee

”

ABOUT DESIGNXRI

OUR HISTORY

DESIGNxRI was founded in 2013 to recognize the value and impact that creativity, design, and innovation brings to our society and the world. As the only state-wide organization for design in RI, we build value in the sector by creating events and programs that invest directly in design businesses, grow design talent, nurture the design community, and connect designers to professional opportunities.

OUR MISSION

DESIGNxRI is a nonprofit economic development organization that creates an opportunity-driven environment for RI designers, design businesses, and the design sector to thrive. We believe design is a critical economic sector that drives change globally, socially, and locally in the state of Rhode Island.

WHAT WE DO

DESIGNxRI works to support and strengthen Rhode Island's world-class design community. Through a series of educational and business training programs like [Design Catalyst](#) and the [Launch Program](#) and social and networking events like [DESIGN WEEK RI](#) and our [Creative Conversations](#) speaker series, DESIGNxRI creates accessible ways for Rhode Island's design professionals to connect, learn, and advance in their careers.



OUR PEOPLE

DESIGNxRI is made up of administrators, designers, and professionals who are deeply committed to supporting a vibrant community of students, educators, practitioners, and design enthusiasts.

OUR BOARD

Nick Scappaticci, *President*

Scott Lyons, *Vice President*

Manan Narang, *Treasurer*

Moises Valcarcel Gonzalez,
Secretary

Sophie Weston Chien

Wendy 'MoMa' Michel

Jo Lee

Sasha Azbel

Lara Salamano

Tuni Schartner

OUR STAFF

Islay Taylor, *Executive Director*

Rue Sakayama, *Director of
Operations and Storytelling*

Reba Mitchell, *Programs Director*

Devanshi Ved, *Programs and
Events Manager*

Anna Brinkhuis, *Marketing and
Graphics Creator*

SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL OF OUR 2024 STAFF & BOARD MEMBERS WHO MADE THE MAGIC HAPPEN!

Berit Lavender, *Co Director*

Rue Sakayama, *Co Director*

Rikki Davis, *Grants Manager*

Amy Devers, *Board Member*

Jill Rasmussen, *Board Member*

Kirtley Fisher, *Board Member*

Sara Ossana, *Board Member*

Yemi Sekoni, *Board Member*

Deborah McDonough, *Board Member*

A NOTE FROM STAFF

In 2024, community members from every corner of the state engaged with DESIGNxRI, as program participants, teachers, mentors, design enthusiasts, and partners. Connections were forged, talent was nurtured, and businesses became more resilient. Together, we sparked change and helped lift the tide for all!

Your steadfast belief in our mission fueled our work throughout the year. Because of your support, DxRI remained agile - improving internal systems while continuing to deliver impactful, high-quality programming across Rhode Island.

Events were thoughtfully curated to inspire, connect, and spotlight designers, engage the broader community, drive foot traffic to local businesses, and showcase the cultural value of design. A standout moment was our collaboration with RISD to bring Cey Adams, Creative Director at Def Jam Recordings and a pioneer of the visual language of Hip Hop in the 1990s and 2000s, to Providence for a keynote address during DESIGN WEEK RI. We also expanded the Design Catalyst Program, running it twice in 2024 and, for the first time, extending eligibility beyond Providence residents by hosting a cohort in Newport.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication, encouragement, and creative energy of you - our supporters, donors, volunteers, board members, partners, funders, government allies, committee members, designers, artists, educators, mentors, students, friends, and family.

Together, we built an environment where Rhode Island designers, design businesses, and the design sector can truly thrive.

With deep gratitude,

Islay Taylor
Executive Director

Rue Sakayama
*Director of Operations
and Storytelling*

Reba Mitchell
Program Director

Devanshi Ved
Event Manager

Anna Brinkhuis
*Marketing and Graphics
Creator*

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

\$198,500

The total amount of funding redistributed to 2024 Design Catalyst Program participants.

Through completing their business milestones, all 18 participants were able to receive funding to support the growth and development of their small creative businesses.

18

The number of Rhode Island creative businesses that completed the Design Catalyst Program.

We offered two rounds of the Design Catalyst Program, and were able to expand eligibility to include participants across the state of Rhode Island for the first time ever.



82

The number of DESIGN WEEK RI 2024 event and open studio hosts.

Through DESIGN WEEK RI 2024 and our first ever Open Studios Weekend, we were able to collaborate with a record number of RI designers, small businesses, design firms, and organizations.



OUR 2024 EVENTS

In 2024, we brought out the creative crowds for a series of community events! Over the course of the year, we hosted six Creative Conversations and the 11th annual DESIGN WEEK RI, complete with the first ever Open Studios Weekend.

DESIGN WEEK RI 2024

Each year, DESIGNxRI hosts DESIGN WEEK RI, a statewide festival of design celebrating designers, creatives, and entrepreneurs! The week offers a unique opportunity for designers to exhibit their work, share their stories, and connect with the amazing creative ecosystem that Rhode Island has to offer. DESIGN WEEK RI 2024 featured talks, tours, panel discussions, workshops, and more that showcased the diverse range of design and creative businesses operating in Rhode Island.

DESIGN WEEK RI 2024 also featured our first ever Open Studios Weekend, during which over 60 designers across the state opened their studios to the community!



CREATIVE CONVERSATIONS



Creative Conversations is a speaker series designed to bring together designers, creatives, and design enthusiasts to exchange ideas and get inspired. In 2024, DESIGNxRI hosted six Creative Conversations events, partnering with local businesses and providing a platform for industry experts and up and coming creatives to share their insights, experiences, and best practices with the broader creative community.

DESIGN WEEK RI 2024

The 11th Annual DESIGN WEEK RI was a huge success, featuring 8 days of incredible design events, from talks and tours to workshops and demos, and the first ever Open Studios Weekend! The week got off to an epic start with the Kickoff Party, and we went out with a bang at WEEK NIGHT, our closing celebration!

4

Key partnerships with RISD, RIHub, Fashion Week, and Gallery Night



8

Events and open studios hosted by DESIGNxRI alumni



20

Events, including four DESIGNxRI featured events

2000+

DESIGN WEEK RI event and open studio attendees



DESIGN WEEK RI 2024

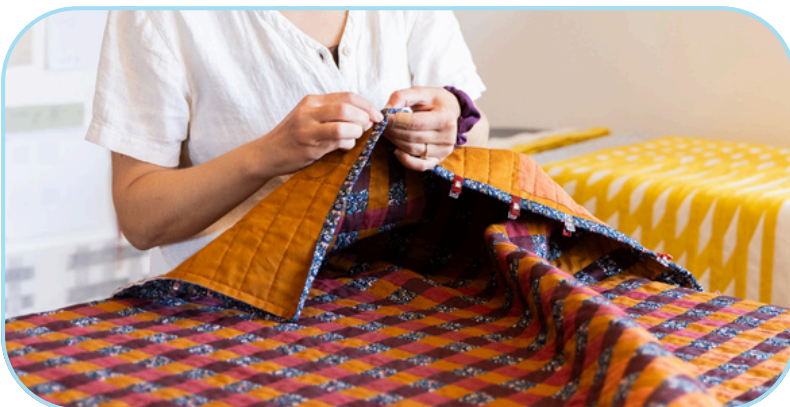
OPEN STUDIOS WEEKEND

DESIGN WEEK RI featured our first ever Open Studios Weekend, encompassing three days of galleries and studios across the state. Over 60 RI designers, creative businesses, and design firms welcomed the community into their creative spaces, exhibiting the brilliance and diversity of Rhode Island ingenuity.



60+

Designers opened their doors to the community across RI, from Newport to Woonsocket



3

Days of open studios across the state



A Designer and Creative
Speaker Series



14

Creative Conversations speakers,
including 6 Design Catalyst Program
alumni

250+

Creative
Conversations
attendees

DESIGNxREDEFINE

Through our ambitious Design ReDefine project, we surveyed hundreds of respondents from across Rhode Island about their definition of design. This data revealed not only the scope of creative practices Rhode Islanders engage with, but also considerations of accessibility and inclusivity that will inform our future outreach and programming.

ACCORDING TO RHODE ISLAND'S CREATIVE COMMUNITY, A **DESIGNER** IS...

“

Someone who manipulates the visual world for a specific purpose

An artist who blends innovation with function, drawing from unique perspectives and lived experiences to create impactful solutions

A professional who interprets needs into solutions

A conduit who creates an object or experience to communicate ideas to an audience

A visual artist who improves the representation and use of everyday objects and media

A creative problem solver

One who uses the (often iterative) process of design to develop products, spaces, and systems

A creator of Aesthetic

One who creates with intention

An innovator that challenges norms and themselves

A person who uses creativity and innovation to make things better

A person that can conceptualize the transformation of materials and thoughts into something admired by themselves or others

”

OUR 2024 PROGRAMS

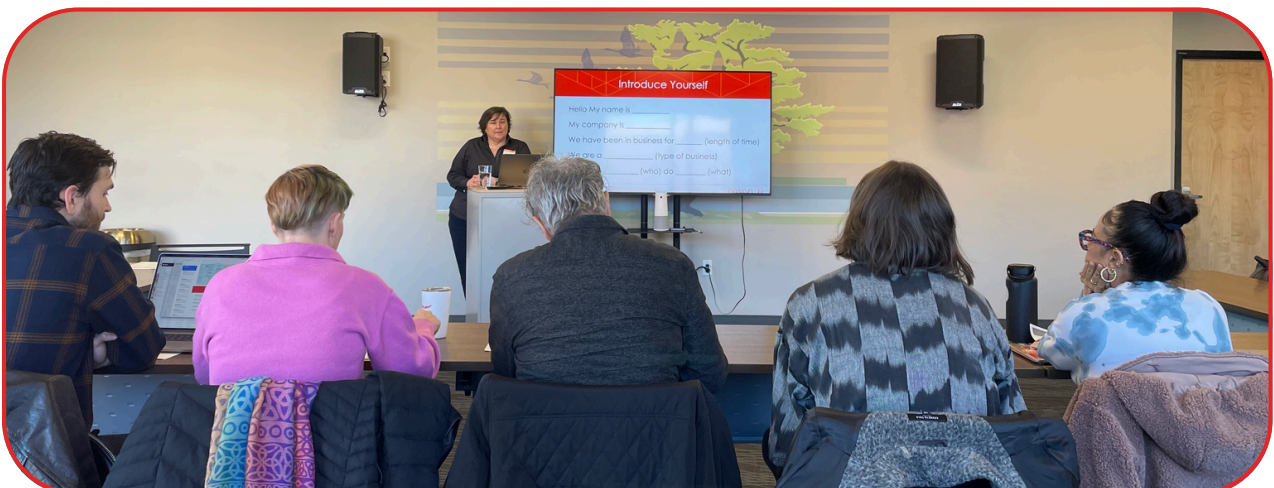
2024 was a year of firsts at DESIGNxRI! We ran two rounds of the Design Catalyst Program and opened eligibility statewide, serving a record number of participants. The Pre-Catalyst Program, now the DxRI Launch Program, ran again to great success.

THE DESIGN CATALYST PROGRAM

The Design Catalyst Program is a business development intensive for creative entrepreneurs. Over five months, participants receive comprehensive, transferable training in marketing, business development, brand identity, finance, and legal frameworks; equipping them with the same level of business expertise they bring to their craft.

In 2024, the program expanded significantly. For the first time, we offered two cohorts, including one open to statewide applicants which was hosted in Newport, RI. This allowed us to build new partnerships, increase accessibility, and serve a more diverse group of participants.

Midway through the year, we refined the program to improve the structure and progression of the curriculum, ensuring each session built upon the last. These changes helped participants more clearly connect the material to their own business practices. We also updated key resources and placed greater emphasis on life skills that support both professional and personal development. As a result, participants were better equipped to apply what they learned and make meaningful progress in their work and lives.





“

“The Design Catalyst Program has been transformative for Fire Mountain Metal Works, both in skill development and in connecting me with a supportive network of peers and mentors. The program offered classes that went beyond traditional business concepts, encouraging me to see my work through a more strategic and sustainable lens.”

Ben Filchak, Fire Mountain Metal Works
2024 Fall Design Catalyst Program

”

“

The Catalyst Program provides us an incredible opportunity to gather with fellow creative business owners to collectively grow, learn, and brainstorm solutions to our unique problems ... But even more importantly Catalyst has provided me with a community! All too often, creative people work in isolation or in small groups. Within our program, I have made fast friends with many fellow creatives whom I likely wouldn't have met otherwise. It's opened doors, and has made me a better (and happier) person!”

Mason Hainey, M.HAINEY
2024 Spring Design Catalyst Program



”

“

As a sole proprietor, doing the majority of my work on my own, Catalyst has allowed me to really expand my professional network, and most importantly, get support & guidance from my cohort of creative business owning peers.”

Siobhán Doherty, Blue Tomato Studio
2024 Spring Design Catalyst Program



”

RHODE ISLAND DESIGN BUSINESSES

SUPPORTED THROUGH THE 2024 DESIGN CATALYST PROGRAM

Audio Geography, Tyler Bisson

Ayumiya LLC, Ayumi Kodama

Big NAZO, Erminio Pinque

Blue Tomato Studio, Siobhan
Doherty

Boxed in Black, Crystal Da Cruz

Feel Fine Jewelry, Analiese
Stinson

Figs & Ginger Studios, Rhonda
Dudek

Fire Mountain Metal Works,
Benjamin Filchak

Fulcrum Stained Glass, Renee
Metro

M Hainey, Mason Hainey

Night Light Neon LLC, Nicholas
McKnight

Planeta, Shiloh Cabot-Miller

Public LLC, Casandra Inez &
Spocka Summa

Sam Rook Interiors, Sam Rook

Steven KP Jewelry, KP Kaplan

Storytime Online, Andreas von
Sachsen-Altenburg

The Rainbow Beard Show, Ricky
Katowicz

Therese Iacono Photography,
Therese Iacono

**The 2024 Spring
Design Catalyst Cohort**



**The 2024 Fall
Design Catalyst Cohort**



THE DXRI LAUNCH PROGRAM

The DxRI Launch Program (formerly Pre-Catalyst) supports early-stage entrepreneurs with free training and coaching to explore design-centered business ideas and build a strong foundation to make their ideas a reality.

Now in its second year, the program guided 15 participants, organized into four coaching cohorts, through the process of developing and launching their businesses. The overwhelming demand for the program highlights the ongoing need for early-stage support in the creative sector.

“

The Launch Program has been so helpful and encouraging, and I can't believe it's free! I will definitely be utilizing DESIGNxRI as an asset in the future.

- **Jayne Baran** *Launch 2024*

”



“

The Launch Program introduced me to so many people that I can now add to my business network, with collaboration opportunities as well, beyond the program classroom. It was amazing, I wish it was a longer program.

- **Laju Ogedengbe** *Launch 2024*

”

INSTRUCTORS

It's the people behind our programs who make these educational opportunities truly impactful. Both Catalyst and Launch are led by talented professionals who are experts in their fields. These working designers and industry leaders are deeply committed to supporting emerging talent in Rhode Island. They generously share their knowledge, mentorship, and real-world experience with participants, offering guidance that helps build stability and momentum for early-stage businesses.

PROGRAM INSTRUCTORS

Adriana Dawson

Galen Mooney

Blake Johnson

Kristine Merz

C. Alexander Chiulli

Megan Boyaval

Devin Samuels

Sara Ossana

Dwayne Keys

PROGRAM MENTORS

Carlos Toro

Manan Narang

David House

Mel Rainsberger

Deb McDonough

Mia Nolan

Janelle Blakely Photopoulos

Mike Zucker

Laila Aukee

Nick Scapaticci

Liz Welch

Tuni Schartner

Matt Cavallaro

Vanessa Boynton Taylor



Rhode Island Minorities in
Architecture & Design

DESIGNxRI is the Fiscal
Sponsor of Rhode Island
Minorities in Architecture &
Design (RIMiAD)



ABOUT RIMiAD

RIMiAD is an organization that fosters connections between individuals from underrepresented groups within the architecture, design, and allied fields. Founded in November 2022, RIMiAD has created a space for networking and community-building among designers and professionals.

A critical part of RIMiAD's mission is to promote diversity in the workplace by providing support to current professionals and inspiring students of all backgrounds to pursue architecture and design fields. RIMiAD hosts meetup events bringing professionals and college students together every other month which are hosted at minority-owned businesses throughout the state.

THE RIMiAD TEAM

Moises Valcarcel Gonzalez, DBVW
Architects

Tami Hughes, DBVW Architects

Jasmine Arndt, Aharonian &
Associates

Evelyn Ehgotz, Union

Joanna Grocott, Signal Works

Karin Hirose, LLB Architects

Oakgar Maung, Gilbane

Pedro Ortiz, DBVW Architects

Julia Reinalda, Taste Design

Carson Smith, Union

Brianna Valcourt, City of Cranston
Planning Department

Jing Wu, Stephen Turner Inc

RIMIAD'S 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

“

The RIMiAD events create a safe and inclusive space for everyone in our industry, fostering a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

- **Ching Ling**, Exposure Lighting

”

Hosted their first workshop: Managing Stress and Preventing Burnout

252

Total attendees, with an average of 58 per event (30%- 50% new attendees at each event)

“

RIMiAD has been an amazing resource and support system for me. Sometimes as a minority designer it can be easy to feel lonesome, but RIMiAD has created such a safe and diverse community of professionals determined to build each other up and connect one another. I have found so many new connections to work alongside and to help grow in the industry. Thank you RIMiAD!

- **Desireé Washington**, Designs by Des Interiors

”

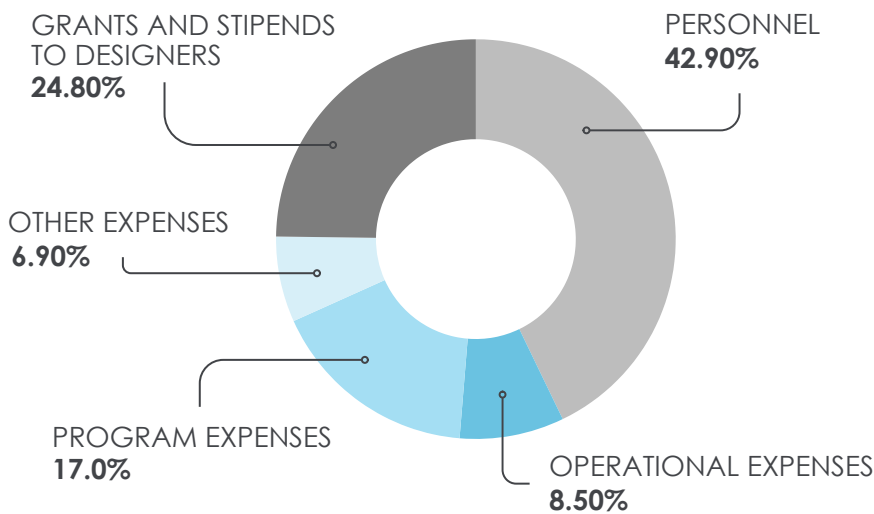
6

Meet-ups across the state of RI: Warren, East Greenwich, Central Falls, Providence (x3)

Launched the **RIMiAD Mentorship Program**, successfully pairing 11 mentees and mentors.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

EXPENSES



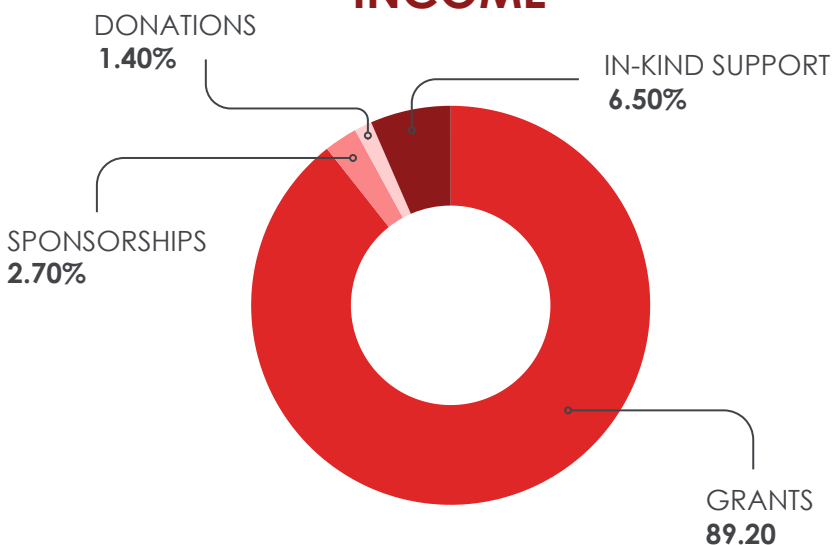
25%

of expenses were spent on funding designers

93%

of income came from grants, sponsorships, or donations

INCOME



18

businesses served in the Catalyst program in one year. The most in a single year to date.

SUPPORTER RECOGNITION

To all of our incredible supporters, thank you for investing your time, talent, and resources in DxRI. Your generosity in 2024 helped us create new possibilities, remove barriers to access, and bring design-driven opportunities to every corner of our community. The following list recognizes the donors and funders who made our work possible this past year. Your commitment to Rhode Island's dynamic design community and your belief in our mission drives everything we do. Want to help design the future together? Reach out to islay@designxri.com to support DxRI in 2025.

BUSINESSES & FOUNDATIONS

(add)ventures
Allegra Printing
Bill Gallery
CIC Providence
Dancing Cats
DBVW Architects
Eastern Bank
Goldman Sachs
10,000 Small Businesses

Goode Landscape Studio
iolabs
Innovate Newport
Johnson and Wales University
Lights|Fashion|Philanthropy
Lindquist
RIHUB
Moniker Brewery
New England Home Magazine

Providence Tourism Council
Socially Professional
Taste Design
RISD
RI State Council for the Arts
Roger Williams Gateway
Center
The Avenue Concept
Union Studio

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

Adam E. Anderson
Aiyah Josiah-Faeduwor
Alexandra Gibbons
Amy Devers
Andrew Williamson
Annalisa Oswald
Arianna Conte
Berit Lavender
Bert Emerson
Brian Leahy
Carl Lizarraga
Carlos Toro
Catherine Chung
Chris Milne
Christina Vivona
Christine West
Christopher Donovan
Colin McCarty
Conor MacKean
David Gomez
David House
David James
David Johnson
David Walden
Deborah McDonough
Devanshi Ved
DJ Johnson
Donald Fruge
Douglas Kallfelz
Elaine Fredrick
Erika Twohig

Evan Matthews
Freya Desis
Gail Pirter
Gretchen Baum
Hayley St. Germain
Ilona Miko
Jackson Mayer
James Jones
Jane Sherman
Janelle Blakely Photopoulos
Jeff Ponzio
Jo Lee
John Huntley
John Richard
Karina Bhattacharya
Katherine Temple
Kathleen Morton
Keegan Bowman
Kelly O'Connor
Kirtley Fisher
Laila Aukee
Lauren Pineau
Layne Mayer
Lesley Ellyn
Leslie Fontana
Lindy McDonough
Lisa Carnevale
Liz Welch
Manan Narang
Marianne Harrison
Marlene Yang

Matt Cavallaro
Mel Rainsberger
Mia Nolan
Michael Rose
Michaela O'Donnell
Mikayla Lee
Mike Zucker
Mitchell McArtor
Moises Valcarcel Gonzalez
Nancy Bink
Nick Scappaticci
perel hana b. sessler
Pernilla Bergkvist Frazier
Rachael Dotson
Robert Samuels
Rue Sakayama
Samantha Bergbauer
Sara Ossana
Scott Lyons
Sophie Weston Chien
Tami Hughes
Tatyana Ayriyan
Terence P. Beaty
Tori Hong
Tuni Schartner
Tyler DiPaola
Vanessa Boynton Taylor
Wendy Michel
William Hollinshead
Yemi Sekoni

2024 GRANT AND FOUNDATION SUPPORT



U.S. Small Business Administration





THANK YOU,
DESIGNXRI

Contact

www.designxri.com

info@designxri.com

819 Westminster St. Unit 03
Providence, RI 02903