

City Economic Development Department Wins 2021 Community Economic Development Award

The City of Williamsburg’s Economic Development Department won the 2021 Community Economic Development Award for their efforts in advancing economic vitality during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA) issued two awards and an honorable mention based on population. The City won the category for communities with a population between 5,001-15,000.

Entries were judged on factors that include innovativeness, transferability, community commitment, and the benefits derived for each. VEDA recognized the award recipients during the VEDA 2021 Spring Conference on March 19.

“Our Economic Development department worked tirelessly to assist our local businesses throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and that work is ongoing,” said Rick Overy, chairman of the City’s Economic Development Authority. “The staff’s efforts certainly made a difference in the lives of our business owners and employees, which helps our entire community get through these tough times.”

The City issued six \$1.3 million in grants through six different programs to existing businesses to help them weather the pandemic. The Williamsburg Department of Economic Development set up virtual office hours to support businesses with problem-solving the challenges of the pandemic.

In addition, the department supported efforts to expand outdoor dining downtown, an effort that restaurant owners lauded as a “game-changer,” due to Gov. Ralph Northam’s restrictions on indoor seating.



“Like all economic development departments across the state, we pivoted to assist our businesses with COVID-19 issues,” Economic Development Director Michele Mixner DeWitt said. “We modified existing programs and launched new efforts with the full support of City Council and the Economic Development Authority. Our regional partners and allies were instrumental partners as we all worked to help our businesses through this unprecedented time.”

“The challenges facing Virginia’s economic development organizations were unprecedented in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Jenny Carter, Director of Workforce Partnerships and Projects at the Virginia Community College System and chair of VEDA’s CEDA awards committee. “All of our awards recipients shifted gears quickly on behalf of their communities to keep their local economies moving in the right direction.”

Williamsburg’s entry will be submitted to the Southern Economic Development Council for consideration in its award program that will take place later this year.

VEDA is a member-based professional organization committed to providing training and development; networking opportunities; and serving as the voice of the economic development community, creating economic opportunity and prosperity for the Commonwealth of Virginia.



“...the small-town charm extends far beyond its many colonial treasures. Today, the appeal lies in its ability to perform a delicate dance between old and new, between honoring its past and embracing a more modern future.”



THE SOUTH'S BEST SMALL TOWN 2020

Southern Living Magazine named the City of Williamsburg at the top of its “The South’s Best Small Towns 2020” list in March of 2020 as part of the magazine’s “South’s Best” rankings.