



Economic Development

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a maroon long-sleeved shirt, is working on the engine of a red fire truck. He is holding a red-handled screwdriver in his right hand and a metal rod in his left hand. The engine is red and has a silver air filter. The man's shirt has a name tag that says "Marty" and a logo for "ATLANTIC Emergency Solutions".

2020  
THE YEAR  
BUSINESSES  
PIVOTED  
AND THE  
COUNTY  
PILOTED

If the year 2020 had a theme for business in York County, it would be “pivot.” The pandemic dealt a significant challenge to all aspects of the economy, and our Office of Economic Development (OED) sprang to action to help keep local businesses afloat. Just as businesses had to shift their focus and think outside the box, the OED redirected its normal operations toward emergency assistance to our business community. Their efforts included:



Disseminating timely and comprehensive information about **available resources**



Advocating for citizens to patronize **local businesses**



Distributing over **1,000 free masks** to businesses



Administering two pandemic-related **grant programs**

#### **COVID-19 Small Business Recovery Grant**

To support a business recovery grant program, the County’s Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Division—in collaboration with the OED—applied to the state Department of Housing and Community Development for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The application was made on a regional basis on behalf of York, Williamsburg and Poquoson. Our request was successful, receiving \$500,000 for York County businesses. We launched the grant program in mid-July, and by the end of the year, 101 York businesses had received grants totaling \$465,250.

#### **York CARES Grant**

This program, implemented in June 2020, provided up to \$3,000 grants to reimburse businesses impacted by the pandemic for operating expenses and COVID-19 related expenditures. The grants were allocated from \$250,000 of the CARES Act funds delivered to York County, and managed by the OED and Finance Department. The funds were all dispersed by October 1, benefiting 87 businesses.

While unfortunately we couldn’t save every business, the majority persevered. We were heartened to see businesses helping each other, neighbors intentionally buying local, and a general can-do attitude that kept spirits up. Along the way, we put together an **“Innovation in a Time of Covid”** series to feature businesses who were successfully pivoting to meet the community’s changing needs. Take a moment to see stories from [Parkway Printshop](#), [Patriot Tours](#), [Taqueria Maria Bonita](#), [Virginia Beer Company](#), [Column 15](#), [Alewerks](#), and [Blend](#).

# CHANGES TO THE COUNTY

Openings in 2020

**474** ■■■■■

Openings in 2019

**451** ■■■■■

Openings in 2018

**473** ■■■■■

## New to the County

- Tractor Supply Co.
- Sukran Bazar
- New Orleans Creole Coffee
- One Girl Desserts & Pastries
- Blend Family Salon
- Caliber Collision (Bypass Rd)
- Off Leash K9 Training
- Beale's East *ground breaking*

## New Construction and Coming Soon

- Affordable Fasteners Supply Company
- Auto Bell Car Wash
- Gangsta Dog (*coming soon*)
- Leebcor Services LLC
- Marlowe We Care
- Miller Group





### **After 19 Years as EDA Chair, Moberg Passes the Torch**

In September—rounding out nearly two decades leading the charge to bring new business and a more diverse economic base to York County—R. Anderson "Rick" Moberg stepped down as chairman of the Economic Development Authority. Taking his place was business attorney Steve Meade, who served as

vice chair for the previous three years, while auto body shop owner Harmon "Junior" Coxtton became the new vice chair.

Moberg, a prominent local architect and founder of James River Architects, first joined the EDA in 1997 and quickly ascended to the chairmanship. Rick's architectural expertise has been a valuable asset to the EDA over the years, as it worked to develop land for commercial use and repurpose aging structures. When Rick was first appointed to the EDA in 1996, he was already a successful architect and active in community organizations including The Rotary Club. He saw the EDA as a new opportunity to do something beyond himself, he said. Five years later, he was elected chairman.

During his tenure, Moberg was instrumental in many successes for the County, including the Yorktown Riverwalk project, beautification of Route 17, the creation of York Commerce Park and, most recently, the launch of Tradewins—a workforce development program in partnership with the York County School Division.



# HELPING BUSINESSES GROW

Our business assistance programs help attract, retain and support business in York County.

To Date  
**\$50,960**

## **Demolition Loan**

Incentivizing the owners of underused commercial properties to the redevelopment market, our Commercial Demolition Program Business provides loans to reimburse their demolition costs for qualified properties. *No demolition loans were granted in 2020.*

To Date  
**\$48,260**

## **Commercial Corridor Improvement Grant**

We brought back this grant that funds a one-time exterior improvement or renovation intended to improve the property/building appearance. Up to \$10,000 in matching funds can be used for qualified external improvements, such as signs, hardscaping, lighting, parking areas or sidewalks.

To Date  
**\$1,547.50**

## **“LOVEVA” Buy-Local Program & Grant**

Taking our buy-local program to the next level, in 2018 we joined forces with the Retail Alliance and its “LOVEVA” app. The app lets shoppers collect rewards at any participating local business, then redeem them at another. York County businesses who get listed on the app receive an automatic loyalty program and inclusion in a prime directory of local businesses. The County has offered 50% matching grants, up to \$75 per business, toward the cost of enrolling.

To Date  
**\$65,527.29**

## **Business Growth Grant**

This exciting new grant can help even home-based businesses, offering up to \$2,500 of matching funds for a one-time expense. The expense can be anything from purchasing equipment to advertising.

To Date  
**\$7,266.00**

## **Google Business View Grant**

We’ve continued the Google Business View Grant Program to encourage York County businesses to claim or enhance their Google business listing. They can receive 50% matching grants, up to \$500, toward the cost of having panoramic photos taken by a Google Trusted Photographer. These interior images can then be posted as a virtual tour using Google’s Street View platform, which has many search ranking and customer engagement benefits.

To Date  
**\$29,600**

## **E-Commerce Grant**

Through our E-Commerce Grant Program, business can receive 50% matching grants—up to \$500 per business or \$1,000 for minority and women-owned businesses—for the design of a new or upgraded website. This program allows businesses to enhance their online presence and therefore increase potential earnings.



### **Recently Renovated**

In a year that was devastating to the hospitality and tourism industries, Great Wolf Lodge turned lemons into lemonade when it was forced to close, and took advantage of the downtime—completing extensive renovations to its rooms, lobby and water park, with no inconvenience to guests.

# REGIONAL INITIATIVES



## The Edge District a New Destination for 'Eat-er-tainment'

You might already frequent the area for drinks with friends or live music. But you might not know it has a new name! In collaboration with our neighboring localities, York County officially debuted “The Edge District” as the brand identity for businesses along Second Street, Merrimac Trail, Capitol Landing Road and the Route 143 Corridor. It runs along the edge of James City County, Williamsburg and York County, and is home to a variety of food, beverage and entertainment businesses.

As part of the EPA Brownfields Program, The Edge District used grant funding to fuel a marketing make-over that united the businesses in the district together under one brand and one message of the district as an eat-er-tainment destination.

In 2020, The Edge District put the Brownfields Program funds into action—creating a new logo and visual brand standards, photography onsite at a series of businesses in the district, and a website to help promote the destination, events and businesses in the district.

Additional grant funds were secured in 2020 from the Virginia Tourism Corporation to further market the district and its new brand in 2021.

*Explore all The Edge has to offer and connect on social media.*



L to R: Casa Pearl Restaurant and Column 15

## Coming Soon to the Edge

### Parkway Printshop debuts new location

After opening their original shop in Lightfoot in 2019, Parkway purchased a new building in The Edge District in 2020, and received a grant from York County's Economic Development Authority to fix up the property. This new, larger and more stylish shop was completed in 2021.

### Former George Washington Inn receiving \$4.2M renovation into new, affordable apartments

After the property spent years in decline, the former George Washington Inn was acquired by a company that specializes in rehabilitating and revitalizing obsolete multi-family developments. The York County Board of Supervisors approved its application to renovate the building and convert its existing 250 motel rooms into 125 apartment units. The \$4.2 million renovation and façade makeover will create affordable housing for a target demographic of “singles in the 25–35 age group, along with a few students, and a few empty nester seniors.”



# Start Peninsula

Validate Your Business



*START! Peninsula winners Chair One Fitness, Hottrok and Wave Coffee Brewer were awarded an initial surge of start-up funding, as well as business counseling and services.*

## Regional Competition Awards Start-Up Funds to Entrepreneurs

Investing in growing the small business community is critical to the Peninsula's overall economic development strategy and maintaining the entrepreneurial ecosystem. For this reason, START! Peninsula was launched in 2012 as an informal weekend entrepreneurial start-up event, produced by the Peninsula Technology Incubator—a collaboration between Hampton, Newport News and Greater Williamsburg. The event's purpose was to encourage people to come with a business idea and work on it over three days with business leaders and mentors to emerge with a valid business concept to launch.

This past year, START! Peninsula transitioned to virtual and added three micro-pitch events leading up to the finale. Pitches were five minutes, with a three-minute Q&A session with the judges. The final event included a keynote from **Safety Nailer**, who participated in Start Peninsula 2018 and was featured on Shark Tank last year.

### The 2020 START! winners were:

- **Chair One Fitness**, a comprehensive chair-based dance fitness program created for individuals who have complications standing or are unable to stand during a fitness regimen.

- **Hottrok**, a performance-based tiling substrate that serves as a radiant heat carrier. It is the only substrate on the market that readily accepts warm wire and has both thermal and acoustic insulating properties.
- **Wave Coffee Brewer**, a coffee-brewing system that works for K-Cups in a microwave oven.

Each winner received \$5,000 to fuel their business growth and a six-month community membership to **Launchpad**, the Greater Williamsburg Business Incubator. The virtual pitch competition included 10 participants, who had participated in previous events earlier in the year. The seven other participants received a small cash prize for their efforts. All contestants will continue to have access to and gain guidance from local economic development departments.

### Specialized Events Foster Growth for Home-Based Businesses

Originally a York County initiative, the annual Home-Based Business Conference and Lunch & Learn Series both expanded to include seven other Hampton Roads localities, thanks to the efforts of County staff in 2018. This new collaboration brought additional resources and support for the event, nearly doubling attendance.

#### Lunch & Learn Series

This monthly educational seminar running May through December features various speakers who give tips and information specifically targeted to the concerns of home-based businesses. Due to the pandemic, the series transitioned to a virtual format for 2020. The series saw higher attendance than ever before and so will remain virtual through 2021.

#### Home-Based Business Conference

The 2020 conference was cancelled due to COVID-19, however the 2021 conference is planned to be held virtually in October 2021.

### Launchpad’s Innovation & Entrepreneurship Programs Taking Off

Launchpad—which provides entrepreneurs and startups in the Greater Williamsburg area (James City County, York County and the City of Williamsburg) with the amenities, counseling, and services necessary to grow a successful business—saw increased participation in 2020. The organization reported more than:

- 131 | unique coach/mentor connections with center activities
- 42 | coach/mentor meetings with student-run companies at William & Mary
- 37 | instances of coaches/mentors/champions attending Rocket Pitch
- 13 | coach/mentor meetings with Launchpad companies

### Greater Williamsburg Region Attracts \$200M in Capital Investment

The Greater Williamsburg Partnership—which works with three localities (York County, Williamsburg and James City County) to attract, retain and grow companies with high-wage jobs—saw a strong year despite the pandemic. The region attracted over \$200 million in new capital investment during 2020, with 52% of those businesses in the advance materials and food/beverage industries. These investments included 33 new projects and up to 650 potential new jobs.



*Kings Creek Commerce Center solar facility and unmanned systems testing and demonstration facility coming in 2021.*

### New industrial-facility authority planning solar farm, drone test park

In November 2018, the Peninsula localities and Gloucester officially established the Eastern Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority (EVRIFA). The EVRIFA grew to 10 localities in FY2020 by adding Isle of Wight, Franklin and Chesapeake. Its first project will be acquiring 432 acres of surplus state property in York County formerly known as the “Fuel Farm.” Project plans include leasing 250 acres to KDC Solar for a 20MW facility and developing the remaining acreage as a light industrial park. A portion of the light industrial park has GO Va. grant funds available to do the initial design for an unmanned systems testing and demonstration facility. The EVRIFA plans to close on the property in early 2021.



## RECOGNIZING OUR BEST IN BUSINESS

*L to R: Big Top Entertainment and Mobjack Bay Coffee Roasters and Petite Café*

### **Big Top, Mobjack Bay Coffee Honored at Business Affair**

At our annual Distinguished Business Affair in February, the York County EDA awarded **Big Top Entertainment** with the 2020 William Rogers “Poor Potter” Award. The honor—named after William Rogers, a successful 18th-century entrepreneur who was known as the “poor potter” of Yorktown—is given to growing businesses that make significant investments in York County.

Big Top celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2020, after growing from a small retail party store into a major event rental and production company, handling more than 1,000 events per year. After outgrowing its Newport News location, Big Top moved to its new York County home in March 2020—an expansive warehouse at 500 Old York-Hampton Highway, supported from the early stages by the York County Economic Development Authority—which redeveloped the land—and the Office of Economic Development.

At the same event, the York County Chamber of Commerce recognized **Mobjack Bay Coffee Roasters and Petite Cafe** as the 2020 Small Business of the Year. Established in 2007 by Celeste and Jo Guacanac, the company later moved into the Historic Cole Digges House near the Yorktown waterfront. Mobjack Bay purchases its coffee beans from small plantations with specific certifications, creating unique roasting profiles to bring out the very best flavors in the beans. Its coffees are roasted weekly, and its café is designed to complement the historic charm of the Cole Digges House, harkening to its colonial heritage as a coffee and tea house. The County also took a role in supporting this business—providing grant money to help move them into the Cole Digges House and retrofit the building for a coffee roasting business.

### **Longstanding Businesses**

York County is honored that so many businesses have stayed and succeeded here for decades. Each year, we put together feature articles to highlight a handful of these County icons, especially those marking an anniversary or celebrating an award. In 2020, we featured these stories:

**[Big Top Entertainment gets new digs befitting its name](#)**

**[Come dine where every day is Cinco de Mayo](#)**

**[Pea Soup makes consignment shopping chic](#)**

**[Smith's Marine Railway: York County's oldest business still in ship shape](#)**

# YORK COUNTY PRIDE



## Alewerks Named Business of the Year by VRLTA

The [Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association](#) (VRLTA) named this brewing company as its Brewery of the Year for their contributions to the tourism and brewing industry in Virginia.

[Read Story >](#)



## Parkway Printshop's Here For Good Campaign Raises More than \$13k for Small Businesses

When small businesses began suffering from the pandemic's effect, one York County shop found a way to help other businesses: printing T-shirts. Customers could designate a business to support with each shirt purchase. [Read Story >](#)

## Commercial Real Estate Leader Wins Both Top Industry Awards for Record Third Year

Monty Spencer recently won both Deal of the Year and Broker of the Year from the Hampton Roads Realtors Association's Commercial Alliance. This was the third year straight he achieved both honors. Deal of the Year means Monty had the highest gross commissions (and the biggest selling price). [Read Story >](#)



## Dodd RV Named Automotive Retailer of the Year

This multi-award-winning company was named the 2020 Peninsula Automotive Retailer of the Year by the Retail Alliance, a nonprofit trade association that promotes the healthy growth of retail businesses in Hampton Roads. [Read Story >](#)



# ALEWERKS

BREWING COMPANY

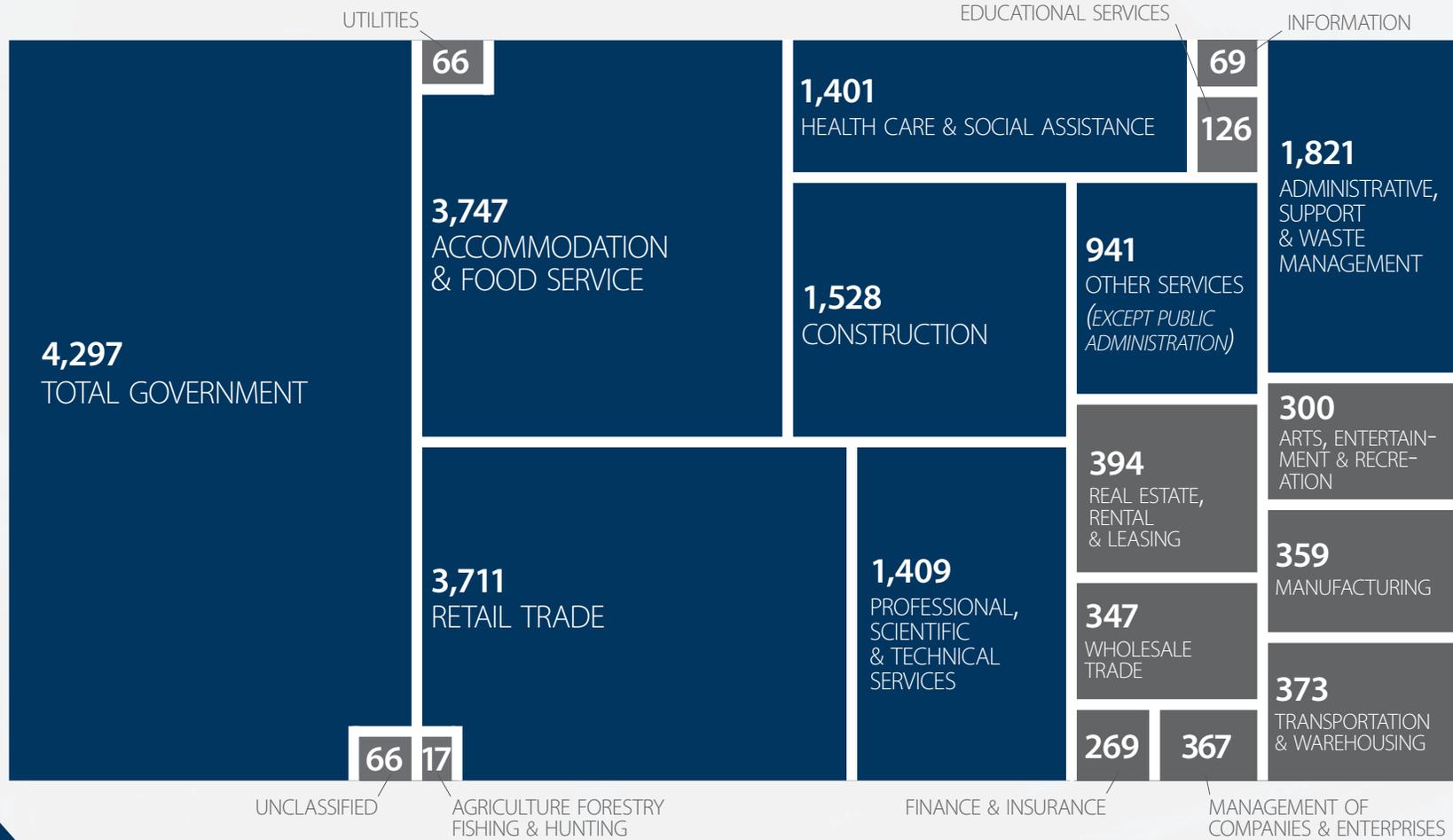


# KEY STATS

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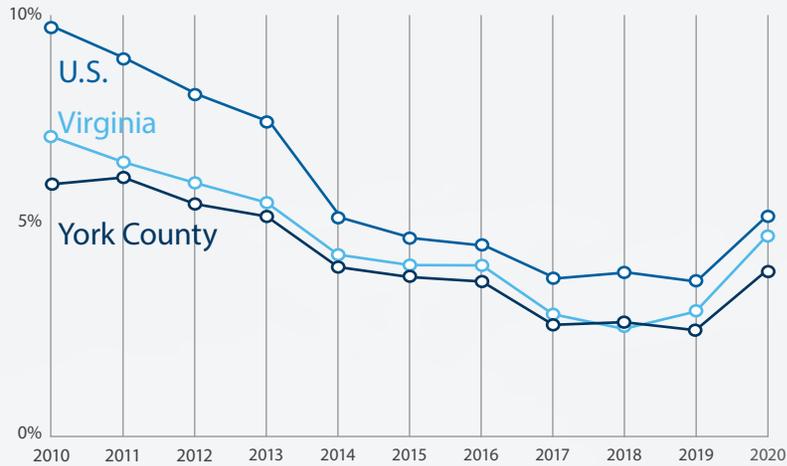
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## Employment by Industry



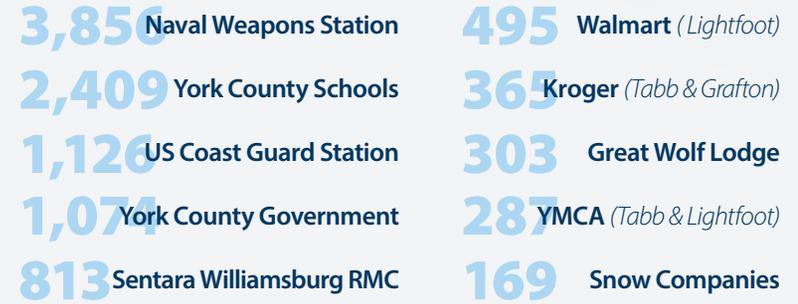
Source: VEDP 4th Quarter 2018

## Unemployment Rates



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

## Top Employers

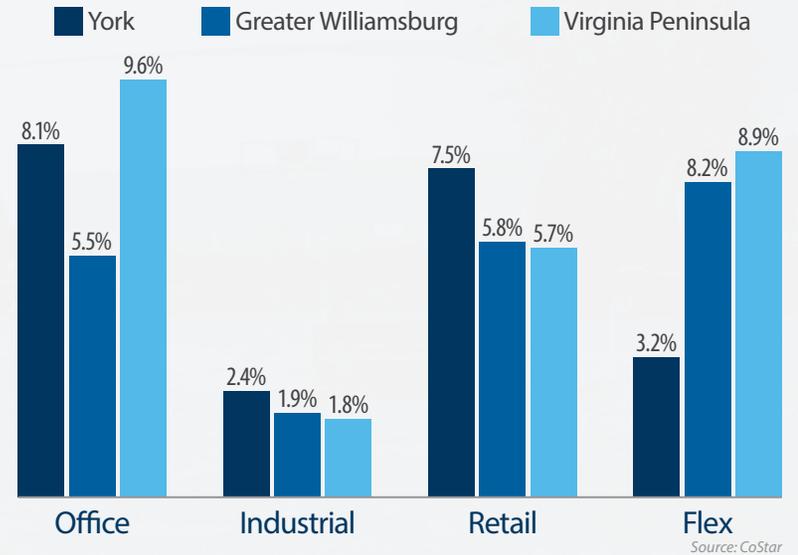


## Building Permits

Year	Residential Permits		Commercial Permits	
	NO. OF UNITS		NO. OF UNITS	
2020	229	\$59,801,501	75	\$10,040,114
2019	258	\$51,943,389	90	\$26,102,442
2018	247	\$46,826,747	102	\$37,478,337
2017	167	\$35,145,861	92	\$16,509,119
2016	85	\$18,338,651	99	\$9,480,635
2015	115	\$28,943,969	156	\$28,180,272

Source: York County Division of Building Regulation

## Vacancy Rates



Source: CoStar



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