

The Edge District comes to the area to create an entertainment destination

[wydaily.com/local-news/2020/03/03/the-edge-district-comes-to-the-area-to-create-an-entertainment-destination](https://www.wydaily.com/local-news/2020/03/03/the-edge-district-comes-to-the-area-to-create-an-entertainment-destination)

March 3,
2020



The Virginia Beer Company is one of the businesses that will be included in the new Edge District which runs along all three localities. (WYDaily/File photo)

Plans for branding a new district at the corners of three localities in the Historic Triangle aim to bring vibrancy and interest to the area.

York County, Williamsburg and James City County have been working together over the past year to create a plan for the new "Edge District" which will run along Second Street, Merrimac Trail Capitol Landing Road and the 143 Corridor, said Robby Willey, a member of the Williamsburg Economic Development Authority.

Willey, who also owns Virginia Beer Company which is located in the district, said members from all three localities and a handful of the area's food and beverage business owners met last year to discuss the potential for a branding project that would bring together the portion that runs through all three areas.

"It's kind of just a cool idea," said Jim Noel, York County's economic development director. "You're in three different jurisdictions, on the edge of each. It's something catchy that intrigues people and gets them excited about going there."

Noel said the idea is to create a brand and promotion plan for the district that would draw in more visitors, locals and businesses. The area is currently home to popular attractions such as Emily's Donuts, Shoofly Dairy Bar, Shorty's Diner and more.

RELATED STORY: From demolition to the Edge District — here's what the city's Economic Development talked about this week

Since the idea's conception last year, all three localities have contributed "seed money" for the project, Willey said. Each locality contributed \$2,000 which was designed to go toward branding and marketing, such as developing a logo and creating social media promotion.

"As business owners we've agreed that shared marketing (a simple logo) displayed in our businesses and on an informational website will help market how close so many food/beverage makers are on our side of town," Willey wrote in an email. "Potentially having a linear social media presence with photos/videos produced by a professional marketing firm."

However, Noel said the localities quickly realized they didn't have the capability to do all of the work on their own and needed to engage marketing companies in the process.

To address that need, Draper Aden Associates, a civil engineering firm, was hired as a primary contractor and Consociate Media was hired as a subcontractor for the project.

Stephanie Heinatz, a partner with Consociate, said they've just started meeting with current business owners to learn about their stories and the opportunities they would like to see in the area. She said in terms of branding, the company is going to look at the history of the location and consider how to bring all the various characters together to benefit the district.

"All of these businesses are individually promoting themselves," she said. "But imagine what you could do to promote all those stories by bringing the people together—it's the power of a collective."

Noel said the localities have been in meetings with the businesses to start the marketing process but are currently stalled while deciding how to approach the public procurement process.

In the meantime, the district has been awarded a \$600,000 Brownfields Grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. The grant will allow Williamsburg to conduct environmental assessments in the area as well as develop six redevelopment plans and prioritize sites for assessment of the support engagement in the community, according to a 2019 [news release](#) from the EPA. *(Story continues below the photo)*



Shoofly Dairy Bar would be another business located in the district. (WYDaily/File Photo)

Part of the goals in The Edge District is to create an “entertainment destination area,” Noel said. He added that the idea is similar to the ViBe District in Virginia Beach or the Neon District in Norfolk.

“Many cities have areas or districts that have their own character or attractions,” Noel said. “So it helps if you brand the whole area...to give it an identity so people start to associate the area with good food and drink and experiences.”

Willey said some ideas have been tossed around such as creating collaborative events, pop-up destinations, social media scavenger hunts and frequent visitor cards for discounts, adding there is also consideration to include all businesses in the area, not just food and drink locations.

The project is currently moving forward now that there are marketing firms working on branding and once grant funding is finalized, Willey said he expects there will be a formal presence of The Edge District by July.

“It goes back to being a collective and able to showcase what everyone has to offer,” Heintz said. “It’s about everyone being under one umbrella which will hopefully benefit the businesses in that district.”

[Always be informed. Click here to get the latest news and information delivered to your inbox](#)