



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

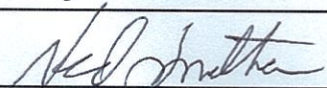
### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Powhatan County  
Program Title: Carry On Forward Powhatan  
Program Category: Community and Economic Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Roxanne Salerno  
Title: Economic Development Manager  
Department: Economic Development  
Telephone: 804-598-4890 Website: www.yespowhatan.com  
Email: rsalerno@powhatanva.gov

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Ned Smither  
Title: County Administrator  
Signature: 

## **Nomination for 2021 VACo Achievement Award**

This application is submitted on behalf of the Powhatan Economic Development Department, sharing the achievements and results of the actions taken during the COVID-19 pandemic for the business community of Powhatan. This application falls within the program section for Community & Economic Development.

### **BACKGROUND**

The new coming year of 2020 was an unforeseen challenge in many ways for Powhatan County, which began with the resignation of the County Administrator in January followed by the halt of society in mid-March with COVID-19 pandemic. Staff had already begun to rearrange duties as the Assistant County Administrator was named Interim County Administrator and budget season was gearing up when all operations seized due to the pandemic. The world was in a state of panic and County officials were being looked to for answers and assistance, which included the business community who experienced an immediate shut-down overnight with everyone staying at home. During this time of toilet paper shortages and fighting in grocery stores for hand sanitizer, the economic development department looked to ways that assistance could be continued for the business community to keep Powhatan going strong.

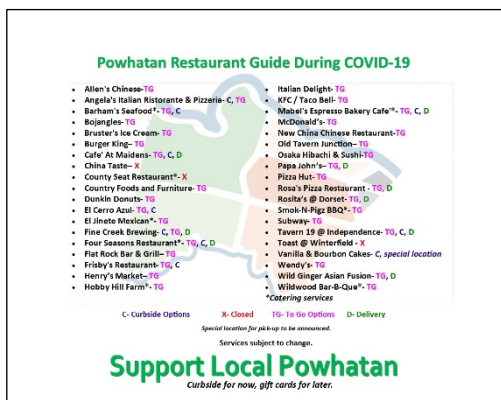
### **DESCRIPTION OF POWHATAN COUNTY**

Originally settled by French Huguenots in the early 1700s, Powhatan County was created by The Virginia General Assembly in 1777. The County was named in honor of the Indian Chief Powhatan, father of Pocahontas. Located in Virginia's Central Piedmont between the Appomattox and James Rivers, Powhatan is 20 miles west of Richmond. Distinctly rural to the

west and featuring suburban development along its eastern boundaries, Powhatan is home to unique businesses including PIEtech (a Richmond "Best Place to Work" winner 2017, 2018 Top 65 Workplaces in Richmond); SanAir Technologies (2017 Governor's Economic Gardening grant recipient, 2018 Top 65 Workplaces in Richmond, Eagle Teleservices (call center for Michelin Tire); Rapid Manufacturing (fabrication, clients include Target and Dick's Sporting Goods); and The Mill at Fine Creek (microbrewery, lodging and destination event venue).

## Challenges

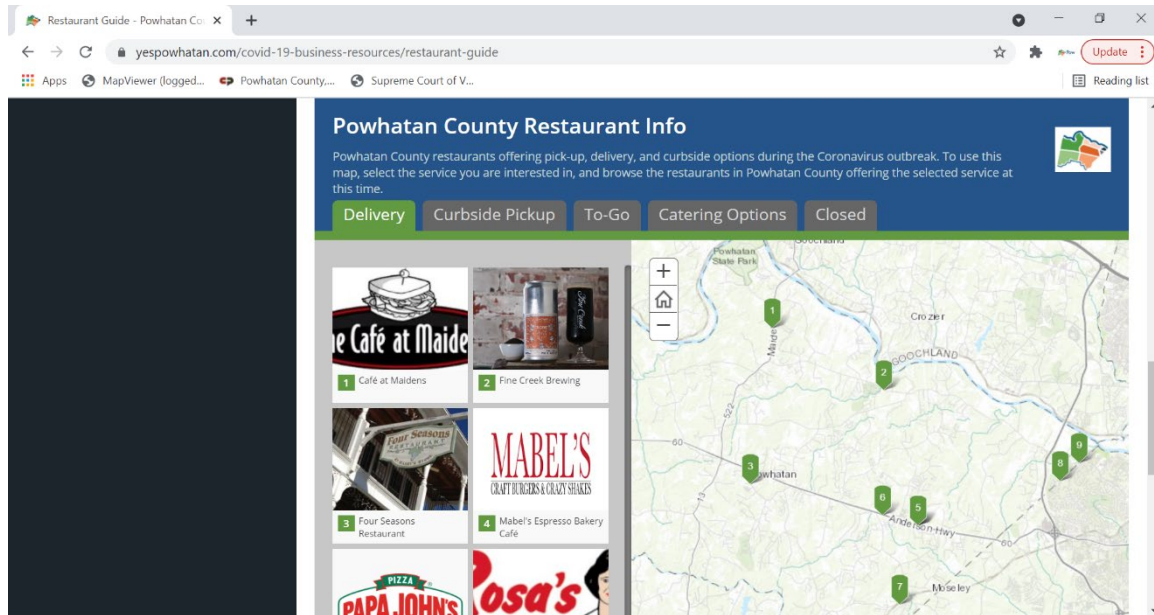
Who, what, when and where was all the information that every business needed all at the same time to find out who to call for assistance, what was available to them, when could they get assistance and where would they be able to go to talk to someone. The ED department went from one and half full-time staff members to one with a new work environment during an uncertain time with no story map to follow. All normal projects and activities ceased and preparation for business communication, assistance and recovery methods were prioritized. This began with specific COVID-19 information pages being added to the main economic development website to offer businesses resources from various federal and state agencies as well as available grant information.



The Powhatan Restaurant Guide was created quickly to establish a guide for not only citizens now staying home but also essential workers needing meals to know which restaurants were open and where curbside was available. This reference guide was quickly turned into a story map on



the economic development website and shared all across the county to better inform citizens with a map and click throughs to websites to make ordering easy.



Staff also joined in with other economic development departments in the Richmond region for weekly group video meetings to gather information, share issues and successes and overall brainstorm what would become the ForwardRVA project. In May of 2020, Powhatan staff participated in the regional Forward RVA business PPE toolkit distributions which offered free essential PPE items of face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, signs and information to small businesses throughout the region.



The Federal CARES Act funding for localities presented an opportunity to put funds directly in the hands of businesses in need, which was made possible with the Powhatan Board of Supervisors authorizing \$517,000 towards business assistance to be distributed by the EDA. The Powhatan Business Assistance Grant was created and open to small Powhatan businesses in two categories based on revenue and employee sizes that gave out thirty-one grants totaling \$368,964. Another grant application was created specifically for eating and drinking establishments to winterize their spaces for increased capacity which gave six businesses \$54,583 to buy tents, heaters, firepits and other essential items to increasing their outdoor space.



These were just some of the bigger actions that staff took during this time to continue to work for the community and offer solutions to new issues. The pandemic took various tolls on different aspects of life with lives lost, jobs cut and the economy's sudden and fast downfall although through this time Powhatan remained one of the lowest in the state for infection rates. Powhatan came through the pandemic stronger than ever expected with a heavy influx of construction and businesses that not only survived but found ways to thrive. The model that Powhatan lived by through this time was "carry on forward" as this was the only way through a trying time with limited staff to accomplish the goals.

Through the maintenance and recovery phase of the pandemic, the previously mentioned actions were just the items being taken on due to the pandemic which were aside from the increased prospect activity and increased commercial construction. During 2020, Powhatan saw numerous commercial projects break ground with a record 61 on-going projects and \$42 million in commercial investment value.

### **Executive Summary**

The Powhatan Economic Development department's model for 2020 was "carry on forward" in a year of trials and tribulations from sudden leadership departure to the pandemic. Staffing suddenly decreased and shifted with all new tasks ahead that would have no chartered territory. Bold initiatives and out of the box thinking created new ways to safeguard existing businesses and ultimately the community. The efforts of the Economic Development department during 2020 not only were admirable on a limited staffing level as well as in a time of changing leadership and goals.

From creating creative maps for restaurant guides to handing out PPE business kits, the efforts of the department resulted in no loss of businesses and a strong overall local economy coming out of the pandemic. Grant programs alone were a huge undertaking for most counties which Powhatan's staff took on all while continuing to provide support to businesses, oversee commercial prospects and keep track of multiple commercial construction projects.

## **Brief Overview**

The Powhatan Economic Development department's model for 2020 was "carry on forward" in a year of trials and tribulations from sudden leadership departure to the pandemic. Staffing suddenly decreased and shifted with all new tasks ahead that would have no chartered territory. Bold initiatives and out of the box thinking created new ways to safeguard existing businesses and ultimately the community. The efforts of the Economic Development department during 2020 not only were admirable on a limited staffing level as well as in a time of changing leadership and goals.

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