



## BUSINESS BEAT

Economic Development News



June 4, 2020

## I-66 WELCOME CENTER CLOSING



We were disheartened to receive notice May 29th from the Virginia Tourism Corporation that the Commonwealth of Virginia will be permanently closing the Manassas Welcome Center on I-66. The building will be converted to a rest area only as a result of budgetary considerations by the VTC, but this is the only Welcome Center slated for permanent closure in the state.

The Manassas Welcome Center is owned and operated by VDOT and staffed by VTC employees. It has been a key component of the City's tourism efforts and its closing will have a negative impact on the City's Historic Downtown as well as on hospitality-related businesses throughout the City. The Welcome Center is strategically located to provide information to travelers who are visiting the Manassas National Battlefield

Park, travelers who want a break during a trip and people whose travel destination is in or near the City. This information and direction drives customers to the City, which has a positive fiscal impact on Manassas and its businesses.

The Department of Economic Development spends \$7,200 annually to run an enhanced marketing and advertising campaign in the Welcome Center, which has supported its operations for the past several years. Historic Manassas Inc. and many City businesses take advantage of this and it is a significant component of their individual marketing efforts. The Visitor Center staff individually stay abreast of the City's activities and regularly visit local businesses to collect information they share with travelers. The three people who staff the Welcome Center are all City residents and the Director serves as a volunteer on the HMI Board of Directors. These highly trained tourism professionals are being relocated to other Virginia welcome centers, taking their valuable knowledge of the City further from our Historic Downtown and Citywide events and attractions. We are grateful to these VTC staff members for everything they have done for Manassas, our residents and the business community.

Economic Development staff has spoken with the President and CEO of VTC and was informed the State's decision was made at the Secretariat level and that neither the City, our local legislators nor our counterparts in adjacent localities were consulted prior to the decision being made. The timing of the closure is unfortunate as the community needs every possible asset it can leverage to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. City staff will continue to evaluate what actions, if any, the City can take regarding the issue or what additional marketing measures will now need to be put in place to counter the impact of this decision. If you have any questions or feedback please [contact](#) the Department of Economic Development.



The Department of Economic Development exists, in large degree, to support the businesses in our community. We take that charge very seriously and will continue to share information we feel will be timely, pertinent and helpful to you. This includes links to other agencies and resources. Please continue to follow us on [Facebook](#) (Manassas Department of Economic Development) and [ChooseManassas.org](#) for

COVID-19 recovery information.

We also encourage your feedback. Please share ideas and information you have that would be helpful to our local businesses directly with us either on our FB page or by email, at:  
psmall@manassasva.gov or nsmith@manassasva.gov.

INNOVATE

INSPIRE

GROW

SUCCEED

**City of Manassas Economic Development Department**

9027 Center Street, Suite 401, Manassas, VA 20110

[Visit us online](#) or call 703-257-8881

