



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING
AGENDA

September 27, 2022
6:00 PM

Council Chambers, Rocky Mount Municipal Building
345 Donald Avenue, Rocky Mount, Virginia

1. Roll Call
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area
 - 3.1. Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA) Discussion
4. Adjournment

ITEM(S) TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER:

Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area

FOR COUNCIL MEETING DATED:	September 27, 2022
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STAFF MAKING REQUEST:	Robert J. Wood
BRIEF SUMMARY OF REQUEST:	A Weekly Report in July included information regarding Designated Outdoor Refreshment Areas (DORAs). That information has been included for your reference. At a recent meeting, the Economic Development Authority (EDA) recommended that the Town explore a DORA for a portion of the Central Business District. Their recommendation was to identify key events when a DORA would be effective. This would allow restaurant patrons to carry open containers of alcohol outside of the establishments, so long as they stay within the designated are—and only during specific events.
ACTION NEEDED:	Staff recommend that this matter be referred to the Community and Economic Development Committee for further discussion.

Attachment(s):

1. DORA Information

FOLLOW-UP ACTION: (To be completed by the Town Clerk)
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Robert J. Wood <rwood@rockymountva.org>

Designated Outdoor Refreshment Areas

1 message

Robert J. Wood <rwood@rockymountva.org>

Sun, Jul 24, 2022 at 2:01 PM

To: Council <council@rockymountva.org>

Cc: Rebecca Dillon <rdillon@rockymountva.org>, Mark Moore <mmoore@rockymountva.org>, Daniel Pinard <dpinard@rockymountva.org>

Council,

At a recent Town Council meeting, Councilmember Lee brought up the idea of designated outdoor zones where alcohol possession and consumption is allowed. The Commonwealth calls these Designated Outdoor Refreshment Areas or DORAs. Cultural and Economic Development Director Pinard helped me gather some information so that we can all get educated on this topic.

The following article from the Cardinal News discusses what they are and how the concept was created by the legislature in 2021:

<https://cardinalnews.org/2021/11/30/with-new-abc-license-virginia-localities-can-create-permanent-open-air-alcohol-zones/>

The City of Danville is utilizing the new DORA legislation to establish such an area:

<https://cardinalnews.org/2022/04/06/danville-votes-to-allow-outdoor-alcohol-in-its-river-district/>

The City of Roanoke is also establishing a limited DORA:

https://roanoke.com/business/local/biz-intel-downtown-roanoke-samples-refreshment-zone/article_ea5a8e4c-e1d8-11ec-af6c-b7332586a068.html

<https://www.downtownroanoke.org/events/dora>

I have attached copies of each article in case you have trouble with any of the links that I have included above.

If you would like to discuss this topic further, please let me know.

Robert

Robert J. Wood
Town Manager



3 attachments

 **20220612 Roanoke Times Article on Downtown Roanoke samples refreshment zone _ Business Local _ roanoke.com.pdf**
396K

 **20220406 Cardinal News Article on Danville votes to allow outdoor alcohol in its River District - Cardinal**



ECONOMY

With new ABC license, Virginia localities can create permanent open-air alcohol zones

Danville and Abingdon are among the first localities in the state to consider a so-called Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area license.



by **Megan Schnabel**

November 30, 2021



Danville's River District has become a focal point for entertainment and dining. The city is pursuing a special license that would allow it to create a permanent Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area, or DORA, that would permit visitors to walk through the district with beers or cocktails. Courtesy of the River District Association.

When Lee Vogler stands in the middle of Danville's River District and looks around, he sees a growing entertainment and cultural hub: restaurants, a brewery, apartments, music venues.

When he imagines the River District a year from now, he sees an addition to that scene: happy visitors wandering the sidewalks with beers or cocktails in their hands.

"More and more, folks are ready to see Danville kind of step into this next phase of its history, becoming a tourist destination, a place where folks can have a nice night out, and have entertainment," said Vogler, a member of the Danville City Council. "We just feel that this is another step in that direction."

Vogler is helping to spearhead the city's effort to obtain a new ABC license that would allow it to create permanent open-air zones where alcoholic beverages can be consumed on the street, and even taken into stores.

Danville, Abingdon and Charlottesville are among the first localities in Virginia to consider a DORA license – that stands for Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area – since the law creating it took effect July 1. About a dozen other localities have received licenses that allow similar zones to be created for specific events.

DORAs are different from festival beer gardens, where trucks usually provide the brews and drinkers must stay within a fenced area. A DORA, by contrast, could span multiple blocks – even a whole downtown – and patrons would buy drinks from ABC-licensed restaurants in the zone and then carry them as they browse nearby merchants.

Vogler sees it as a logical continuation of Danville's efforts to reinvigorate itself, a process that has been underway for years with the renovation of vacant downtown buildings into residential and commercial spaces but last year got a

“I don’t think the results would be some sort of unmanageable chaos,” said Doug Plachcinski, Danville’s director of planning. “We’re just not that rowdy. Even our existing live music – everything closes up at 10 o’clock.”

Doug Beatty, the driving force behind a petition seeking a DORA that would encompass about six blocks of Abingdon’s Main Street, said he’s heard the concerns in his town but thinks it’s “much ado about nothing.”

“Abingdon will never be downtown New Orleans or the French Quarter. It’ll never be Savannah. We’re just not that,” said Beatty, who owns Bonfire Smokehouse in Abingdon’s historic downtown.

Beatty said he’s learned from his decades in the restaurant business, both in Abingdon and in Asheville, North Carolina, that putting “feet on the street” is a key to a thriving downtown, and he believes that a DORA would help create the right kind of atmosphere to attract more people to Abingdon’s historic district.

Tonya Triplett, the Abingdon’s director of economic development and tourism, said the grassroots effort has prompted a lot of discussion in town, and some fears about noise and drunkenness.

“It’s an education process,” she said. “When I was first hearing about it, I thought, My goodness, this is going to be like Bourbon Street. And that definitely is not something that we are interested in.”

But the town has been looking at how other states have implemented DORAs, she said, and they’ve seen reports from other towns that haven’t seem to have had any problems.

One idea they’ve been talking about would be to start small – to create the first DORA just in the farmers market area, and then expand it later if it’s successful.

Town officials are considering logistical questions as well: How does the sanitation department deal with the increased trash that would be produced, since

very public jolt when more than two-thirds of Danville voters voted to allow a casino to be built in the city. Caesars Virginia is slated to open in 2023 with 500 rooms, plus tens of thousands of square feet of meeting and convention space.

“The message that we continue to receive from our citizens in general is ‘We want more’ – more entertainment, more music, more nightlife,” Vogler said. “And so we are trying to meet that demand.”

For its first DORA, the city is targeting the River District, which Vogler describes as a “gathering hub of activity.” It’s a walkable area that’s home to a high concentration of businesses that could benefit from added visitors, he said.

“I view this as something that ties in with entertainment and culture, this communal kind of atmosphere,” he said. “Our River District, that’s what that is for us ... so it seemed like the logical place for the first one.”

A handful of other states have created similar licensing options.

Ohio, for instance, which approved its first DORA in 2015, now has 81 of the zones – including 32 created just last year – according to a July story in the Dayton Daily News.

Michigan approved the creation of so-called “social districts” last year; as of this summer, there were 40 across the state, according to a story in MLive, a statewide news site.

While tourist meccas like Bourbon Street or the Las Vegas Strip get most of the publicity surrounding public drinking, local DORA backers will be quick to tell you that they don’t want to be like those places. Even if they did have neon aspirations, they would be unlikely to ever achieve that kind of atmosphere.

each to-go beverage must be in a disposable plastic cup? What if there are merchants who don't want to participate – do they need special signage?

“This council is very conscious about making sure we balance the tourism experience with the citizens who live here,” Triplett said.

“We want to just make sure that we're crossing all of our t's and dotting all of our i's, and that we've heard all of the concerns.”

While it might be easier to obtain the more limited version of a license – the kind that allows open-air alcohol zones during certain events – Beatty said he's committed to pushing for a permanent DORA.

“We don't want to have certain days of the week or really weird hours on certain days – none of that,” he said. “We need to make this simple and consistent and easy to follow.”



GO Fest, Roanoke's annual outdoors-focused festival, moved downtown for the first time this October, and Downtown Roanoke Inc. applied for a license that allowed it to create a zone where people could drink alcohol outside, without the need for a beer garden. Courtesy of Kait Pedigo, Roanoke Outside Foundation.

No one in Virginia has received a full DORA license yet, but more than a dozen localities or nonprofits have obtained a more limited version that's similar to the old local special events license and allows for the creation of a time-limited refreshment area for a festival or other event.

That's the route Downtown Roanoke Inc. took. The nonprofit successfully applied for a DORA license that allows it to create outdoor beverage zones for up to 16 events over the course of the year. The impetus was last month's GO Fest, which moved downtown for the first time in its history.

The outdoors-focused festival, which ran for three days, in years past had always been held at River's Edge Park, with beer gardens served by trucks. But when organizers decided to move it downtown, it made sense to work with nearby restaurants instead of bringing in beer trucks to compete with them, said Jaime Clark, vice president of marketing and communications for DRI.

The desire to give a boost to local restaurants, which have been pummeled by the pandemic, has been a driving factor for at least some of the DORA licensees, including Tazewell Today, a nonprofit that handles event planning for the town of Tazewell.

In the past, Tazewell Today would get a banquet license and bring in a beer truck for its First Fridays series, said Emily Combs Davis, a member of the Tazewell Town Council who's also on the board of Tazewell Today.

"That was nice, but we now have restaurants on Main Street that we want to support," Davis said. "We're bringing all of these people to Main Street, but if we have a beer truck, we are competing with the restaurants for the business, and that's not really what we want to do. We want to encourage the economic activity to the restaurants."

Julia Boas, director of marketing for the Roanoke Regional Partnership and an organizer of GO Fest, said she could see the appeal of creating a permanent DORA, especially if Roanoke were to close off the city market area to traffic – an idea that has periodically surfaced over the years.

She wondered, though, how it would work logistically.

For GO Fest, extra security personnel were hired to patrol the edges of the refreshment area to make sure no one came into or left the zone with alcohol. How would that work with a permanent DORA? she wondered.

“You’d just have to trust people, I guess,” she said. “There could be a serious learning curve of people taking their alcohol wherever.”

She paused, then said: “Then again, people could, in theory, take beers out in the streets whenever they wanted, but they don’t do it. People are like, ‘Everybody’s going to go insane and lose their minds because you let them take a beer out.’ People could always walk around with alcohol and you would never know. They don’t do it. It’s not the societal norm, so we don’t do it.”



The new setup for GO Fest in Roanoke allowed patrons to buy beer and cocktails from local restaurants rather than beer trucks. Courtesy of Kait Pedigo, Roanoke Outside Foundation.

In Danville, city leaders haven't publicized the DORA push yet, but Vogler and Plachcinski both said the feedback they've received has been positive.

Rick Barker, who owns two restaurants in the River District, Mucho Taqueria and The Garage, said he hadn't heard of the DORA plans but liked the idea.

“Generally, we would be supportive of that, because it promotes a relaxed, casual, somewhat festival atmosphere,” Barker said. “It’s entertainment-friendly, and for that reason we would be supportive.”

Pre-COVID, Mucho would host occasional block parties. The city would close the street, and patrons could wander with their drinks within the limited area.

“Customers love it,” he said. “It’s like one block out of Bourbon.”

Diana Schwartz, executive director of the River District Association, said she believes that a DORA would be one more amenity that would encourage people to visit Danville's downtown, and she thinks that it fits in with the city's other tourism and economic development initiatives, like the casino.

"You have some very forward thinking folks here in Danville," she said. "They understand there's risk involved whenever you're trying to do something to move your community forward, but thankfully they're very very smart, and it's calculated risk, and it's educated risk, and so far it has certainly paid off."

Plachcinski's office is working through the logistics of a DORA plan, including what the boundaries should be. A public safety plan will have to be developed, and the city will need to figure out what entity should hold the license. Eventually, the city council will have to vote on the proposal.

Danville is already eyeing two other potential DORA sites: North Main commercial area, across the river from downtown, and the area around the casino project, called Schoolfield.

"Initially the first effort is to support our existing and growing businesses," Plachcinski said. "After that, we hope to use the tool more as kind of direct economic incentive, to stimulate actual growth and business creation."



ECONOMY

Danville votes to allow outdoor alcohol in its River District

The ordinance passed Tuesday night will allow the city to create a so-called DORA that will allow patrons to carry drinks in the open. If Virginia ABC signs off on a license, Danville will be the first locality in the state with a year-round Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area.



by **Megan Schnabel**

April 6, 2022



Danville's River District has become a focal point for entertainment and dining. The city is pursuing a special license that would allow it to create a permanent Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area, or DORA, that would permit visitors to walk through the district with beers or cocktails. Courtesy of the River District Association.

Danville is on the cusp of becoming the first locality in Virginia to create a year-round zone where visitors can carry beer and cocktails on the sidewalks and into stores.

The Danville City Council on Tuesday approved an ordinance that will allow the city to create a so-called Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area, or DORA, in its River District. Virginia ABC must now approve a license, a process that could take 60 to 90 days, according to Lee Vogler, the council member who has spearheaded the city's effort.

"I was worried that maybe somebody had gotten ahead of us, but no, we're still going to be the first, so I'm happy about that," Vogler said Wednesday morning.

A state law that took effect last July created the DORA designation; it was part of a larger pandemic-era move to tweak Virginia's alcohol laws that also opened the door to to-go cocktails and delivery of alcohol to homes.

Before DORA licenses were available, an organization that wanted to serve alcohol at an outdoor event would have to bring in a beer truck or other vendor, and drinking would be limited to fenced-off areas like beer gardens.

By contrast, a DORA can span multiple blocks, and patrons can buy drinks from ABC-licensed restaurants within the area and carry them throughout the zone.

And, for localities like Danville that take an extra step, a DORA can exist independent of any particular event.

While the law allows DORA licensees to hold up to 16 events a year, with each event lasting no more than three days, it provides an option for localities that want greater freedom: A town or city council or county board of supervisors can

adopt an ordinance requesting an increase in frequency and duration of its DORA.

According to an ABC spokesperson, DORA licenses have already been issued in 15 Virginia localities, but none of those involved such an ordinance. (The current DORA licensees are in Alexandria, Charlottesville, Fredericksburg, Hampton, Harrisonburg, Manassas, Norfolk, Onancock, Richmond, Roanoke, Scottsville, Suffolk, Tazewell, Winchester and Wytheville.)

By and large, Vogler said, there's been a lot of excitement about the idea around Danville. He's heard some questions about how a DORA would be implemented, he said, but city staff tried to address any concerns in the ordinance.

Outdoor alcohol consumption within the DORA would have to stop at midnight. (It could resume at 8 a.m.)

The ordinance prohibits alcohol consumption in Danville's city hall, the library, schools, city buses, the courthouse, the Riverwalk Trail and a handful of other properties. The city market and city parks also would be off-limits, unless a separate ABC license had been issued for an event there. The ordinance also prohibits alcohol consumption on the property of any place of worship.

Private businesses within the DORA wouldn't have to allow customers to bring drinks in – the owner of a clothing store who's worried about red wine spills, for instance, could post signs prohibiting alcohol. Nor could patrons bring beverages they bought at one restaurant into another eatery.

The boundary of the DORA would be marked with permanent signage. Public intoxication would still be illegal, and the police department would "regularly patrol" the DORA and coordinate with the license holder about security, the ordinance says. (The city itself won't be applying for the ABC license; that will fall to the nonprofit Danville Development Council.)

Across Virginia, some groups that have sought the new licenses have said that they see DORAs as a way to support local restaurants during the pandemic.

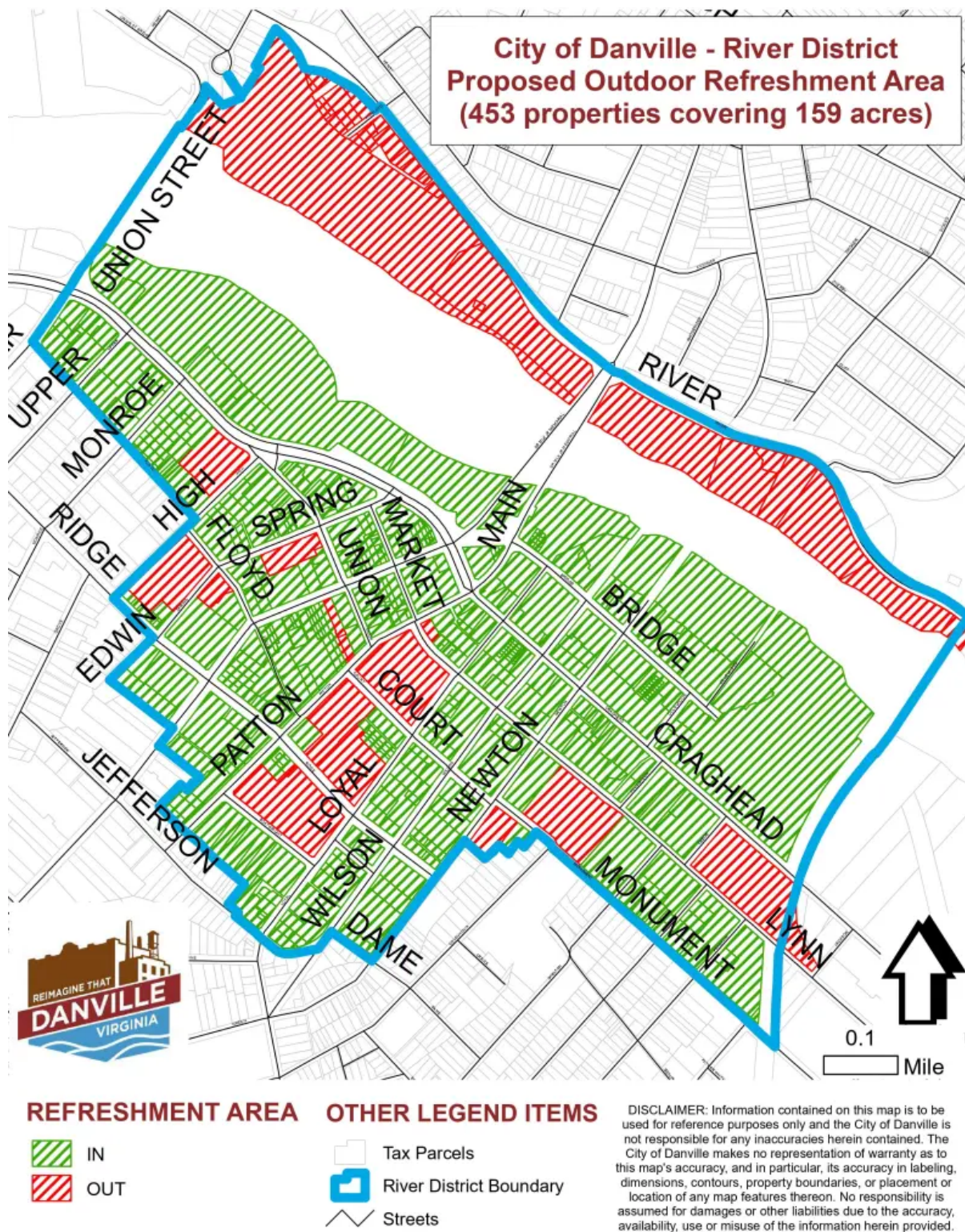
Others have touted it as a tourism or economic development tool.

Last fall, when Danville was already well into discussions about establishing a DORA, Vogler said that he saw it as a logical continuation of the city's efforts to reinvent itself, and as a response to residents' demand for more entertainment options.

By law, the city can set up three DORAs. The River District, a walkable, well-defined area that is home to numerous ABC-licensed restaurants, was a logical first step, Vogler said. The city's Schoolfield area, where a Caesars casino will open next year, is another possibility.

But there's no rush, Vogler said.

"We kind of want to wait to see what happens with this one, and what we learn from this, and any adjustments we need to make," he said. "We do plan at some point to utilize the other two, but we don't want to just rush into them. We kind of want to see where the growth and development happen over the next couple of years."



Map of Danville's designated outside drinking area. Courtesy of Danville.

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https://roanoke.com/business/local/biz-intel-downtown-roanoke-samples-refreshment-zone/article_ea5a8e4c-e1d8-11ec-af6c-b7332586a068.html

Biz Intel: Downtown Roanoke samples refreshment zone

Alicia Petska.

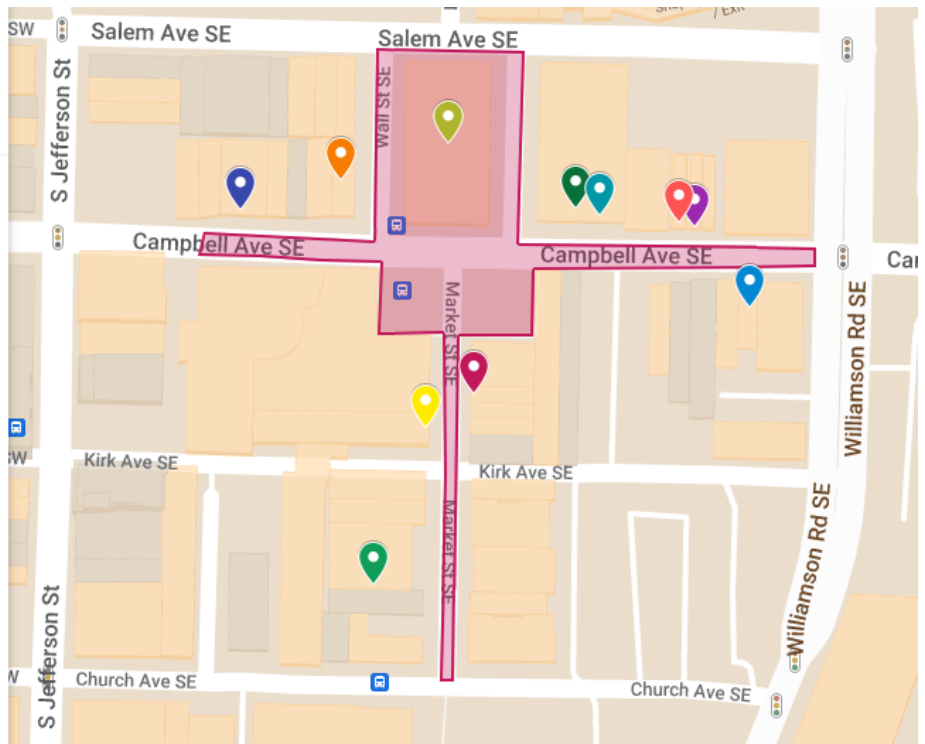
Jun 12, 2022

Refreshment Zone - Summer



Participating Businesses

- Jack Brown's Beer & Burger Joint Roanoke
- Caribbica Soul
- Cabo Fish Taco
- Three Notch'd Craft Kitchen and Brewery - Roa...
- Benny Marconi's
- Table 50
- Alejandro's Mexican Grill - Downtown
- Wok N Roll Kitchen
- Fork in the Market
- Cedars Lebanese Restaurant
- Shishka Mediterranean Grill and Hookah Bar



The pilot program will be in effect on weekends, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays to Sundays, between now and July 31. More details are available online at downtownroanoke.org/events/dora.

Courtesy of Downtown Roanoke Inc.

Alicia Petska.

Downtown Roanoke visitors will be able to sip drinks in the sunshine under a new summer pilot program just launched by the district.

Eleven restaurants and counting are taking part in a seven-week trial run of an outdoor refreshment zone approved by Virginia ABC.

The zone, filed for by **Downtown Roanoke Inc.**, allows customers to buy a drink and stroll outside with it. The drinks, which will be poured in clearly marked, disposable cups, can't be taken into other restaurants but can be toted into nearby retail shops that are taking part in the pilot.

Outdoor refreshment zones are a new concept in Virginia. The move, enacted by lawmakers last year, expands on a prior statute that allowed portable drinks in designated areas but only for special events.

The new law was developed as legislators were seeking ways to aid businesses and support the cultivation of entertainment districts.

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- 4 **Decorated Virginia Tech track star Cole Beck back with football team after two-year absence**

Roanoke was the third place in the state to secure a license for a “designated outdoor refreshment area.” Organizers said it struck them as a fun and novel way of drawing people downtown.

“The entire goal is really to get people to come down and explore all that we have to offer,” said Jaime Clark, vice president of communications with Downtown Roanoke Inc.

The pilot covers a zone around the downtown market square. The license offers the flexibility to shift that to other parts of the district in the future but that slice was picked for the trial run. If it's successful, organizers will consider next steps.

The outdoor refreshment zone will be in effect on weekends, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays to Sundays, between this weekend and July 31.

Drinks can't be taken beyond the bounds of the zone. Signs are posted to mark the perimeter. Only participating, ABC-licensed establishments can sell portable drinks.

Shoppers should check if a retail shop allows drinks to be brought in. Look for signage on the doors.

The initial list of participating restaurants, which organizers expect to expand, includes: **Jack Brown's Beer & Burger Joint, Caribbica Soul, Cabo Fish Taco, Three Notch'd Craft Kitchen and Brewery—Roanoke, Benny Marconi's, Table 50, Alejandro's Mexican Grill, Wok N Roll Kitchen, Fork in the Market, Cedar's Lebanese Restaurant and Shishka Mediterranean Grill.**

More information about the program and a map of participating restaurants can be found online at **downtownroanoke.org/events/dora**.

3 killed in shooting
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gdad

Undoubtedly yet
another good guy wit...

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Ben Cline

Couldn't happe
nicer fellow.

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