

Center of Attention

THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT ASSOCIATION OF VIRGINIA BEACH CONTINUES TO GROW AND PROVIDE A POPULAR UPTOWN SPOT TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY

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irginia Beach was officially incorporated as a city in 1952, making it one of the youngest of the area's seven cities. However, thanks to the resort area, with its vast expanse of Oceanfront excitement, including a 3-mile boardwalk, it quickly grew to become the largest city by population with the highest income per capita in Coastal Virginia.

In the 1980s, city leaders had a vision to create an "uptown" area that would provide a mixed-use development that included living spaces (condos and apartments), restaurants, high-end and unique retailers, spectacular office spaces, entertainment venues, a hotel or two and even a couple of grocery stores. The idea was to make it an all-inclusive place where people could live, work and play in a space where one could easily walk to wherever they needed or wanted to go. They also wanted to make a space where people from outside of Virginia Beach would want to visit, bringing additional revenue opportunities to the area. To put their plan in action, they created the Central Business District Association (CBDA).

Gerald Divaris, chairman/CEO of Divaris Real Estate, Inc., was one of the original founders of the CBDA and one of the landowners upon which Town Center was developed. "If you look at any community that grows and is vital and vibrant, it has to have a central place that the people can feel is their place," Divaris says. "A place they can have an affinity with. A place they'll go to celebrate a great occasion. If you don't have that core—that local environment that

they become associated with—you lose a lot of energy for a community. That's what Virginia Beach was lacking before Town Center was conceived. So, for us, it was important to provide all of the component pieces that made for a successful soul for the community. And that was living, working, playing, being entertained, the cultural components, art district ... all of those pieces. So today, when you come to Town Center Virginia Beach, you'll be amazed. Not necessarily because of the shops or entertainment. People are coming because this is their place. It's easy to come to. It's easy to shop. It's easy to park. And a lot of people live here."

Armanda Hoffer Properties, Inc., a full-service real estate company with nearly 40 years of experience in developing, building, acquiring and managing properties and projects, was so impressed with the plan, they moved from their Chesapeake location to Town Center. "The City of Virginia Beach had the foresight back in the '80s to designate this area as a Central Business District, with the idea that someday they would be able to attract someone such as ourselves in order to create what you see now," says Armada Hoffer CEO Louis Haddad. "When we came along in 1999, the vision they had was something we believed in based on the demographics from the city, so we were able to come into a partnership pretty quickly, and within years we were able to break ground on the first phase. We're now six phases in, working on the seventh, and the Center continues to expand and add new offerings. We're very pleased with the way it turned out."

Although Armada Hoffer also works on projects outside of the Coastal Virginia area, they still have a deep connection with Town Center and Virginia Beach. "We love this area—it's our home," says Haddad. "We're doing business now in Atlanta, Charlotte, Charlestown, Raleigh/Durham and Baltimore, and we think what we have here at home certainly rivals any of those places."



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THE BUSINESSES

Town Center is home to more than a million square feet of office space. Pender & Coward, a full-service law firm with experienced attorneys for every legal need from business law to complex litigation and family law to personal injury cases, was one of the earliest businesses to jump on the Town Center bandwagon.

“In 2000, Pender & Coward recognized the potential of the Virginia Beach Town Center concept and committed to relocating the firm from its prior home of 20 years,” says Pender & Coward CEO Dave Arnold. “At the time, Town Center was nothing more than a conceptual plan ... a rather bold and progressive vision which required a significant leap of faith but which promised us the benefit of tremendous synergy. We were one of the first tenants to sign a lease within the new development and received naming rights to the North Office Tower at 222 Central Park Ave., where we remain today. Fifteen years later, the move has proven to be a wonderful decision. Our firm has thrived in Town Center, and that success has allowed us to expand our footprint by opening offices in Chesapeake and Suffolk. We have played an active role in the CBDA from its inception, and our attorneys continue to serve in CBDA leadership positions. Pender & Coward employees appreciate the abundant amenities of Virginia Beach Town Center and enjoy being a part of the Town Center community.”

THE SHOPS

The retail experience at Town Center is like no other in Coastal Virginia. They have a large collection of stores you won't find anywhere else in the area including the following:

- Anthropologie
- Bluemercury
- Confetti Café and Gelato
- Destination Maternity
- Francesca's
- Free People
- Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant
- Irving's Detailing Station
- IT'SUGAR
- Lululemon Athletics
- Modern Salon & Spa'
- Monkee's of Virginia Beach
- Muse Paint Bar
- Paper Source
- Town Center Cold Pressed
- Ulta Beauty
- West Elm

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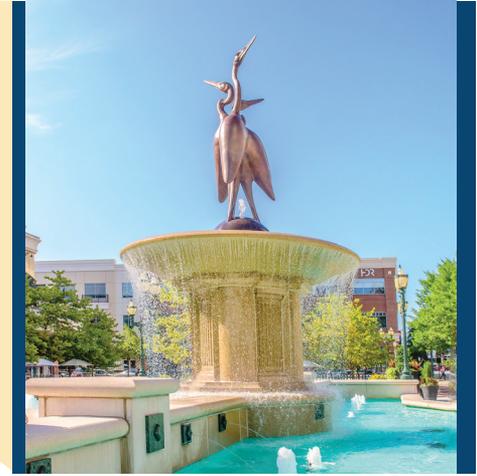
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Of course, no retail experience would be complete without a jewelry store. David Cohen, owner of Boyer's Diamonds, offers everything from jewelry to watches, loose diamonds, engagement rings, wedding bands and more. They also offer jewelry repair and custom design work.

"Boyer's Diamonds was established 31 years ago as a jewelry store in Williamsburg," says Cohen. "I've had a business as a diamond wholesaler for 29 years, and I used to do business with Boyer's. Eight years ago, the owner decided to retire, so I bought the business from him. However, I have lived in Town Center for many years, and I just love the concept of it. It's upscale, it's busy, and it reminds me of my hometown, Tel Aviv, Israel, because there is so much to see and do, and people are out walking around. So, I thought, 'How about if I open a store here so I can give my knowledge and my prices to the public?' There are a lot of businesspeople here and a lot of offices. There are also a lot of high-end stores, so that gave me the confidence to move forward with my plan. I still have my wholesale business and the store in Williamsburg, so I spend a lot of time driving between the two stores."

Traveling back and forth on a daily basis can be challenging, but Cohen has a deep passion for what he does. "I love what I'm doing, and it makes me feel good when a customer comes in and finds what they are looking for. We do a lot of custom work, so people can come in, tell me what they want, and I make it for them. It can be something you won't find anywhere else in the world, but it's something they have been dreaming about—maybe something they have had in mind for years but couldn't find it anywhere. Once you see their faces and how happy you've made them, it makes you feel really good. So, I love what I do, and I love making people happy."

Cohen has been pleased with the progress his store has been making at Town Center. "Every new store takes time to get established, but I see a difference every day," he says. "When you're in the jewelry business it generally takes five years to get established. Here at Town Center, I think it's going to go faster for me."

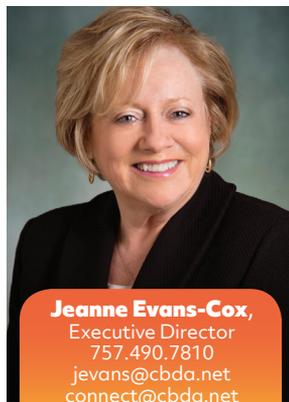
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The **Central Business District Association** supports the growth and development of the business community within and outside of the Virginia Beach-Pembroke Strategic Growth Area.

Our work with local and state government to enhance the only urban core in our city benefits the region as a whole. With over 160 member companies, CBDA provides company networking opportunities as well as informational and educational events and makes policy decisions that affect today's businesses. Fun events such as the Annual Golf Tournament, Mayday Wednesdays, Holiday Party, and Princess Anne High School Internship Day are part of our member benefits.

Go to www.cbda.net for further information



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THE PEOPLE

Businesses that move to Town Center have a smart ally in their landlord. Katie Caraviello, business development and community relations manager and a member of the Divaris Real Estate team, is dedicated to creating business development and promotional opportunities for Town Center's retailers and restaurants.

"My goal is to create activities and promotions to generate revenue for our retailers and restaurants," says Caraviello. "We create themes that will benefit the Center as a whole. For example, earlier this year we did a 'Once Upon a Town Center' promotion where we had three Disney® princesses at three different stores, and we had some activities out on the fountain plaza. We literally drew in hundreds of people every Sunday that we had the event. Sunday is key because it can otherwise be a slow day for merchants and restaurants. Our goal is always to let the community know we have these very unique and interesting businesses here, at a local location, so you don't have to look for their products online."

Caraviello is focused on creating ideas that will showcase Town Center as a one-stop shop. As an example, on Aug. 4, they will be hosting "Love it Up," a wedding show that is designed to let future brides and grooms know they can have an incredible event without needing to rush all over town to get to different destinations.

"A wedding show is not something you necessarily associate with Town Center, but the idea for this promotion is to provide one big, inclusive day that highlights all of the businesses we have here that relate to the wedding industry," says Caraviello. "We want to showcase that couples can pick out their rings at Boyer's Diamonds, register at one or more of our unique shops, buy their wedding dress at David's Bridal, get their tuxedos at Men's Wearhouse, have their rehearsal dinner at one of our incredible restaurants, have their wedding at the Westin Hotel, and they can do it all in one centralized location."

GET TO KNOW US

"The Central Business District Association really focuses on what's called the Pembroke Strategic Growth Area," says Jeanne Evans, executive director of the Central Business District Association.

"There are strategic growth areas formed by the City of Virginia Beach all around the city. The Pembroke Strategic Growth Area is about 1,400 to 1,500 acres of developable or re-developable property. This is really the urban core of the city. My focus is really on this urban core. It's the only urban core that the city has. It's the downtown of Virginia Beach, but we like to call it 'Uptown.' It's a unique environment—this work, live and play environment—and it's a very important part of the success story of the entire beautiful City of Virginia Beach that we have. We're very fortunate to have a God-given ocean. So, we're a resort city, and we have farmland at the south end of the city. We have suburban areas throughout the city where people can enjoy lots of parks, lots of bikeways. But then we have this urban core. And this urban core was designed to be very user friendly. When you look at the whole city of Virginia Beach, this urban core is extremely important to the continuity and creation. It's shared. We offer an environment that is different from other areas but has that very relaxed/uptown/downtown kind of feeling here."

History

The CBDA was founded 30 years ago by a coalition of local business leaders to support the growth and development of Town Center and Pembroke.

Mission

The CBDA's mission is to serve as an advocate for its membership and to support the growth and development of the business community within the Pembroke Strategic Growth Area (SGA). CBDA seeks to promote the area as a primary center for businesses, offering unique professional retail, residential, culture and recreational opportunities. It is recognized that advancements in policies and amenities within the urban core ultimately benefit the entire city and the region as a whole.

Advocacy

The CBDA provides a forum to assess the needs and establish priorities within the SGA, while identifying and defining issues of importance to its membership. CBDA has developed meaningful relationships with government, community and business leaders to help shape legislative

initiatives that enhance business opportunities and influence government action that will directly benefit the Pembroke SGA and its stakeholders.

Issues

Priorities include economic development, transit alternatives, zoning and code improvements, environmental protection, infrastructure planning and culture.

Restaurants

The CBDA's culinary selection spans across the globe. Thirty restaurants within three city blocks make this a one-stop passport to cuisine perfect for your next lunch meeting or winding down after work.

Events

CBDA has an annual program of events designed to provide members with access to informative speakers and create exceptional networking opportunities.

"Businesses pick this area because it's central," says Gerald Divaris. "They pick it because they have access to a majority of the population. It has all of the components to give merchants a business platform during the day—not just on weekends or at night. That's very important for retailers. It smooths out the process."

The Arts & Entertainment

The last, but certainly not final component of the live/work/play appeal of Town Center is that you can go there to have fun. For those who enjoy the movie theater experience, Regal Cinemas® Columbus Station 12 is a theater complex featuring new-release films, plush seating and an exceptional concession stand. Food, fun and laughter is on the menu at Funny Bone Comedy Club, a large venue that regularly hosts high-caliber, national acts, as well as "up and coming" stars of tomorrow.

The Sandler Center for the Performing Arts brings in a variety of entertainment choices, from big name concerts and symphonies to Broadway plays/musicals, and so much more. Also promoting performing arts, Zeiders American Dream Theater is a professional, nonprofit theater company whose mission is to provide artistic experiences to the community in a forum that fosters and introduces new, exceptionally gifted artists, composers and creative writers. ■

The Central Business District Association is pleased to welcome its newest tenants that have opened (or are about to open) since July 2018, including:

RETAIL

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Lamia's Crepes
Williams Sonoma
Pottery Barn
Virginia ABC
M&M Spa

OFFICE

Elaine Luria
Summit Funding
C.H. Robinson
(opening very soon)
Hazen and Sawyer