

The Business Council merged with the Greater Williamsburg Partnership. Here's what's up with that

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The former Binns of Williamsburg location, at 435 W. Duke of Gloucester St., sits empty in Merchants Square Wednesday, March 13, 2019. (WYDaily/Sarah Fearing)

A regional economic development program called the Greater Williamsburg Partnership has merged with the Williamsburg Business Council.

The Greater Williamsburg Partnership will now be managed by the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance's Business Council as part of its "mission," the chamber and tourism alliance announced in a news release Monday.

The move was made after the Business Council and Greater Williamsburg Partnership looked at "national best practices" and determined the collaboration would be beneficial for the region.

"Greater Williamsburg Partnership becoming part of the Greater Williamsburg Business Council is a win for Greater Williamsburg," said Terry Banez, executive director of the Business Council. "The Greater Williamsburg Business Council can offer important resources and support, while Greater Williamsburg Partnership brings a regional mission that markets Greater Williamsburg by fostering job creation, facilitating new investment, and seeking to diversify our economy through economic development."

The Business Council was formed after Senate Bill 942 went into effect July 1, 2018. The Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance was restructured after SB 942 came to fruition to determine how to spend money generated by the bill.

SB 942 sets aside tax revenue generated by a \$2 room tax from hotels, motels and bed and breakfasts. It also sets aside money from a 1 percent increase in state sales tax. [Half of the funding from the taxes will go toward marketing the Historic Triangle and a tourism destination.](#)

"After Senate Bill 942 created the opportunity for the restructuring of Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance, and coupled with the desire to enhance and strengthen Greater Williamsburg Partnership, it did not take long for both organizations to recognize the benefits of sharing their common economic development missions," the news release reads.

The Greater Williamsburg Partnership has been in existence since 2016. It focuses around two "key factors" in Greater Williamsburg's success, according to the news release: the "talent pipeline" for graduates from local universities, and an above-average economy and high livability rating.

The merge also means the Greater Williamsburg Partnership will seek a new director.

Banez said the new director, once hired, will "hit the ground running" with several projects that are already in the works. Greater Williamsburg Partnership has already contracted with consulting firm Pegasus Partners, which would assist the organization in creating a strategy for longterm foreign investment and "well-paying" quality jobs.

The new director will also help use a recently-awarded \$600,000 Community-Wide Brownfields Assessment Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The grant will help examine adaptive reuses of existing properties in the area.

The grant projects will be collaborations between the Greater Williamsburg Partnership, Business Council and area localities including James City County, York County and Williamsburg.

"This really is the next step for Greater Williamsburg Partnership" said Steve Meade, chairman of the Greater Williamsburg Partnership. "We gain additional support with a successful group of marketing and communications professionals, while at the same time Greater Williamsburg Partnership brings a proven regional economic development mission and focus to a welcoming new home."

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