

Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area – Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area?

In 2021, the Commonwealth of Virginia adopted legislation (HB 2266) to allow local governments to establish, by ordinance, up to three Designated Outdoor Refreshment Areas (DORA), which would permit the consumption of alcoholic beverages within the designated area. Virginia ABC has the regulatory authority to approve a DORA, which are likely to be entertainment and walking districts.

What is required for the Town of Abingdon to adopt a DORA?

Town Council must adopt an ordinance that specifies requirements of the statute including the size and boundaries of the DORA, a public safety plan, and any other considerations deemed necessary by ABC.

What are the rules pertaining to the consumption of alcoholic beverages within a DORA?

Established ABC requirements such as the purchaser being at least 21 years of age apply. In addition, alcoholic beverages must be purchased from a permanent retail on-premises licensee located with the designated area. The beverages must be contained in disposable containers with a maximum capacity of no more than 16 fluid ounces that clearly display the selling licensee's name or logo and the DORA logo. Businesses with on-premises licenses may not allow outside alcohol into their establishments. Personal alcohol or alcohol from outside the DORA is not allowed.

What other regulations are associated with a DORA?

Virginia ABC will review and issue licenses for the designated districts. As part of the license, the Town is required to adopt a public safety plan, which will include the designation of public areas reserved for ride-sharing activities. Additionally, the Town will be required to post appropriate signage clearly demarcating the boundaries of the designated district and adopt a sanitation plan and map of trash receptacles.

Are special events allowed in a DORA?

Yes. Other than the Town, only a business improvement district or non-profit can apply for a license to hold an event and any such events would be limited to 16 per year. The licensee must specify the size and scope of the area within which events will be held and ensure adequate security for the event and appropriate signage identifying the boundaries of the event.

Who enforces the DORA regulations within a locality?

The Abingdon Police Department would be responsible for enforcing DORA regulations, ensuring participating retailers and consumers are in compliance with the Town's ordinance.