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COMMUNITY LAUNCHES VIBRANT SPACES IN DOWNTOWN NORFOLK
Project provides catalyst to new and existing businesses

NORFOLK, Va. – (May 2015) – Downtown Norfolk Council, Grow and the local business community have joined together to develop a new program, [Vibrant Spaces](#), to accelerate neighborhood-defining street-level businesses in the commercial district.

The program rewards the most compelling business ideas with matching funds. Want to upgrade your existing business or open a new business? There's \$180,000 in capital and support for both.

Phase I of Vibrant Spaces offers six available spaces in Downtown Norfolk. Property owners have agreed to lease the spaces at 50% market rent for two years to those businesses that are selected to create vibrant and compatible businesses in Downtown. These business owners will also receive a \$20,000 kick-start grant.

Existing Downtown businesses may also submit ideas for funding to make their businesses more exciting and vibrant. There is \$60,000 in matching grants available for this portion of the project. Ideas can range from sidewalk activation, upgrades to storefronts, improving signage, business collaboration or adding outdoor seating or a rooftop option. The program will match the level of grants to the ideas. Selected ideas will receive up to 50% of the project costs or up to \$10,000 per business.

Vibrant spaces help define a city's unique sense of place. They're well-designed and alive with activity, embracing new ideas to create one-of-a-kind experiences, products and services. Put simply, they're the places you can't wait to tell your friends about.

Match our vision, and we'll match yours. Interested business owners can review the Request for Proposals, available spaces and suggestions for vibrant businesses at www.vibrantspaces.com.

"The Vibrant Spaces initiative may be new, but the momentum in Downtown Norfolk is not," said Drew Ungvarsky, CEO of Grow and one of the project leaders. "The past couple of years have produced new businesses, new ideas and a whole new attitude in our city. Our vision for more vibrant street-level businesses will be the catalyst to take Downtown to the next level."

“This program is one-of-a-kind,” said Mary Miller, president and CEO of Downtown Norfolk Council. “We’ve researched catalyst programs across the country and have not found anything like it. It’s a community effort to stimulate new business and shape our Downtown exactly the way we envision it – exciting, vibrant and alive. This is definitely a business accelerator, and we anticipate very positive results from these efforts.”

Project leaders are open to any ideas and have made a few suggestions to get the process going. These include: Grocery Store / Urban Market, Bakery, Farmers’ Market, Brewery, Bike Shop, Wine Shop, Boutiques, Art Supply Store, Pet Supply Store, Homemade Ice Cream Shop, 24-Hour Diner, Chopped Salads, Home Décor, Game / Toy Store, Live Music Venue or Candy Store.

A marketing effort and website led by Grow will serve as the hub for the contest, connecting would-be participants to the vision and facilitating the application process. Public relations and social media will extend to national audiences, attracting qualified tenants and sharing a progressive story about how Norfolk is defining its future. The program will launch in rounds as a repeatable process.

Vibrant Spaces is an initiative by the Downtown Norfolk Council, in collaboration with Grow. The application deadline is July 8, 2015. To learn more contact vibrantspaces@downtownnorfolk.org or call 757-623-1757.

Downtown Norfolk Council (DNC) is a private, not-for-profit membership organization comprised of businesses and individuals working toward a dynamic, attractive and prosperous Downtown. DNC also manages the Downtown Norfolk Improvement District, a 48-block special services district with enhanced services that keep Downtown friendly, safe and spotless. Connect with Downtown Norfolk on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram or visit DowntownNorfolk.org.

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