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VIBRANT SPACES PROGRAM RECEIVES 97 RESPONSES
Creativity and enthusiasm expressed in applicants

NORFOLK, Va. – (August 2015) – Downtown Norfolk Council’s [Vibrant Spaces](#) program received 97 submissions, more than triple the anticipated number of proposals. The initiative was designed to accelerate neighborhood-defining businesses in Downtown Norfolk.

Vibrant Spaces launched May 20, 2015. Interested parties were asked to submit online proposals outlining ideas to create vibrant and exciting new businesses in Downtown. More than 100 people came out to view the available spaces during an Open House on June 13, and applications were accepted through July 12.

Phase one of Vibrant Spaces offered six available spaces in Downtown Norfolk. Property owners agreed to lease the spaces at 50% market rent for two years to selected businesses. These new business owners will also receive a \$20,000 kick-start grant. There are 85 new businesses vying for this incentive and opportunity.

Existing Downtown businesses also submitted ideas for funding to make their businesses more vibrant. There is \$60,000 in matching grants available for this portion of the project, and 12 businesses submitted ideas. 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.

A selection committee, made up of a variety of people with vested interests in Downtown, is reviewing the submissions and will determine the business ideas that most effectively align with the goals of the program. The committee’s breadth provides an objective review process.

“This is another great step forward for Downtown,” said Drew Ungvarsky, committee chair. “These new businesses and enhancements to existing businesses will further define Downtown’s unique qualities. We are incredibly pleased with the overwhelming response we’ve received and the quality of the applicants.”

Applicants will be notified if they are selected or not in early September. The new businesses will have three weeks to negotiate the leases with the landlords. A special announcement event will be scheduled in September to showcase the exciting new offerings in Downtown.

“We will also be announcing the matching grants to existing businesses in this timetable,” said Mary Miller, president and CEO of Downtown Norfolk Council. “Since this program has never been done before, we had no idea of what to expect for a response. This level of interest in Downtown has assured us of the success of this initiative and underscores that we will have even more opportunities down the road. The level of inquiries from prospects and landlords has been phenomenal.”

Vibrant Spaces are well-designed and alive with activity. They create one-of-a-kind experiences through products and/or services. Examples of ideas 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.

“The response says a lot for the program, and even more for the future of Downtown,” added Ungvarsky. “We are all so excited to see what’s next in Downtown’s evolution.”

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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