

# Deal brings Urban Outfitters to downtown Norfolk

## NORFOLK

Urban Outfitters, an eclectic national clothing chain that targets teens and young adults, is about to give downtown a major retail boost.

Developer Bobby Wright is expected to sign a lease as early as today to bring the retailer to his building at 271 Granby St., known as the A.A. Adams Building.

The City Council unanimously agreed Tuesday to provide what the city calls a performance grant - a refund of taxes paid by Wright - over 15 years, up to a maximum of \$880,000, to help attract Urban Outfitters. Chuck Rigney, the city's interim development director, estimates the city will pocket nearly \$500,000 in direct revenue over the 15 years.

The city has used the incentive to attract other businesses, including the Dominion Enterprises headquarters building.

Mayor Paul Fraim acknowledged that Tuesday's ordinance, which was added to the agenda late Tuesday, was more hurried than usual. But he added: "I think what's being asked of the city is relatively modest in light of the potential upside."

City Manager Marcus Jones said lengthy negotiations began to bear fruit over the weekend and concluded Tuesday morning. He asked for the council's approval on the tax incentives Tuesday because, he said, Urban Outfitters wants to begin construction in January, in time for a June opening. The council won't meet again until January.

The final deal is a complicated pact between Wright, Philadelphia-based Urban Outfitters, the city and the Downtown Norfolk Council.

The DNC has agreed to give Wright a loan of \$35,000 and grants over the first two years totaling \$20,000. The DNC is a nonprofit organization funded by taxes assessed on downtown businesses and residents.

Wright and Urban Outfitters will spend \$2 million to renovate the building, and Time Lounge and a camera shop will be displaced.

Wright will lease 13,806 square feet of space on three floors to Urban Outfitters, which will become the largest retailer on Granby Street.

Anthropologie, a women's apparel and housewares chain owned by Urban Outfitters, also might locate a store at nearby MacArthur Center mall, according to four city officials close to the deal. They asked not to be identified because they were not authorized to speak about the matter.

MacArthur Center general manager Jim Wofford said Tuesday that the mall's owner has had conversations

with Anthropologie but that the retailer has no plans to locate there.

Urban Outfitters and Anthropologie are popular, coveted retailers. For years, city leaders expressed hope that they could attract Urban Outfitters downtown.

"They're so sought-after across the country," said

Cathy Coleman, DNC president. Urban Outfitters will be a catalyst in attracting other retailers, she said.

Sture Sigfred, past president of the DNC and owner of several downtown restaurants, has repeatedly expressed concerns to city officials in the past year about the decline of portions of Granby Street. On Tuesday, he called the deal "a game-changer."

Urban Outfitters carries casual clothing and accessories - jeans, cargo pants, T-shirts, sundresses - with a young, hip sensibility. Anthropologie markets to sophisticated female shoppers and carries clothes; accessories; lingerie, bath and beauty products; and housewares.

Both stores' closest locations to Hampton Roads are in suburban Richmond.

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