



News & Notes from Downtown Norfolk

A week with top leaders

Last week we were honored to have not one but two of our City's leaders sharing time with our DNC members. On Wednesday more than 170 people gathered for the first Member Briefing of 2009 and to hear Mayor Paul Fraim talk candidly about the hopes and challenges facing the City and downtown. The Mayor was at times cautionary, encouraging and optimistic, touching on a number of topics: from the weakened economy and its impact on the City, to the interruptions caused by construction and, finally, to the great future coming our way. I even heard someone compare the event to a casual talk with the Mayor in one's living room. Our next Member Briefing will also be a treat when we welcome City Manager Regina Williams as our speaker. More details will follow but be sure to mark your calendar for February 4th.

On Thursday, members of DNC's Public Safety Coalition were honored to have Police Chief Bruce Marquis as their speaker. The police department, 3rd largest in the Commonwealth, is doing all that it can to maximize resources to keep crime low and our citizens safe. The group enjoyed the Chief's presentation so much that I heard they are now lobbying to get him a helicopter. And congratulations to Mary Drake, chairman of the Public Safety Coalition, on her recent marriage. She now happily answers to Mary Robbins. The committee meets every month and all downtown security professionals are encouraged to participate.

Town Point Park taking shape

If you get a chance to take a look at Town Point Park from the windows of one of our waterfront office towers, I encourage you to do so. The project, on time and on budget, is really starting to take shape. We're now on a six-month countdown to July 4th when the park will re-open with the 2009 Harborfest celebration. Some have expressed concern about the loss of the trees in the park but they should take heart. When the park re-opens, there will be 186 trees of 10 different species, 1,365 shrubs, 2,270 perennials and 8,422 ornamental grasses and ground covers. And this says nothing about the fountains, the public art, the waterfront location....it will be an incredible place.

Upside of downtown construction

It's hard to miss the construction of The Tide, which has made its way to the heart of downtown. City Hall Avenue and Monticello have become more difficult to traverse but downtowners are proving to be a resilient group. We talk about the upside of what is going on downtown and of course we are referring to the amazing new developments and anticipation of The Tide. Police officers are doing a great job of keeping vehicles and pedestrians moving well during rush hour. Kudos to City staff for permitting the contractors in a manner that keeps the interruptions manageable. And thanks to all downtowners who are taking these interruptions in stride.

Eat well without forking it over

Have you checked out the Restaurant Week menus on our website? The restaurants have really outdone themselves. They are offering incredible menus at great value. Don't forget, Restaurant Week runs 8 nights, from the 18th to the 25th. These dates were chosen by the restaurants six months ago so as not to conflict with the Virginia Beach Restaurant Week. We were recently surprised, then, to see that they've changed their dates to coincide with ours. I suppose we'll just chalk it up to "the sincerest form of flattery." Regardless, we encourage you to enjoy some good eatin' and great values downtown next week, where you'll find the best restaurants, the best chefs and all your friends. So eat well, without forking it over – reservations recommended.

Hail to our Ambassadors

One last note....despite the cold, the wind and sometimes even rain, our Public Safety Ambassadors and our Clean Team Ambassadors are going about their duties. And now with the construction downtown they are working harder than ever. While we've made sure they have excellent cold weather gear, nothing warms them like your "pat on the back" when you see them on the job. They really appreciate your many kind words.

Cathy Coleman
President & C.E.O.