

Commune bringing 'authentic' food to downtown Norfolk's NEON District

By Jordan Grice -
May 10, 2017

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Commune is opening in the NEON District on May 20. (Jordan Grice/Southside Daily)

NORFOLK — The NEON District is in for a merging of styles as Commune Norfolk will open its doors in the [Texaco building](#) in less than two weeks. [Made popular in Virginia Beach](#) for their culinary works of art with organic and localized ingredients, Commune is set to open up their second restaurant location to 759 Granby St. on May 20.

Considered a creative epicenter of the downtown art district, the Texaco Building is known for exposing the community to a variety of culture through art exhibitions and live entertainment featured at the [Work I Release](#) venue. Restaurant owner Kevin Jamison said he felt that the venue and its artistic history was a great match for Commune's style.

“The building was amazing,” he said. “It was really beautiful – old with a lot of character and a lot of authenticity which is kind of the same thing with our building in Virginia Beach. We feel like we’re serving really authentic food so it’s only right for us to be in a very authentic building.”

The restaurant will occupy the entire first floor of the building and is expected to [be open](#) Tuesday through Sunday.

In past years, Work I Release has served as a night-life destination filled with live performances and art exhibits to highlight local and non-local artists, typically over weekends.

According to C. Arthur “Brother” Rutter, owner of the Texaco Building, he is excited to see Commune move in and provide people with a “reason to come to the Art District any day of the week.”

“The art community will benefit from a venue with great food and art,” he said. “People like a mix of their culture. They want a broader and richer mix.” He added that while Work I Release built support and appreciation for the NEON District, it was time to shift away from the weekend nightlife entertainment model into more “sustainable model” that will continuously attract people to the area and to the different things the district has to offer.

While the live entertainment aspect of Work I Release will end, both Jamison and Rutter agreed that the venue will still feed the communities desire for artistic expression with scheduled art exhibits.

The venue will host an art event on opening day, featuring work from Virginia Beach artist [Andrew Breitenberg](#).

According to Charles Rasputin who served as a conceptual artist and creative director of Granby Street arts venue in years past, that even with the shift he is confident that Jamison and his staff will continue to explore the essence that Work I Release captured in the NEON District.

“The focus has always been a place where the community can come and see art in the midst of their other adventures,” Rasputin said, adding that he hopes to be able to collaborate with the Rutter Foundation and Commune to bring other curated displays in the future.