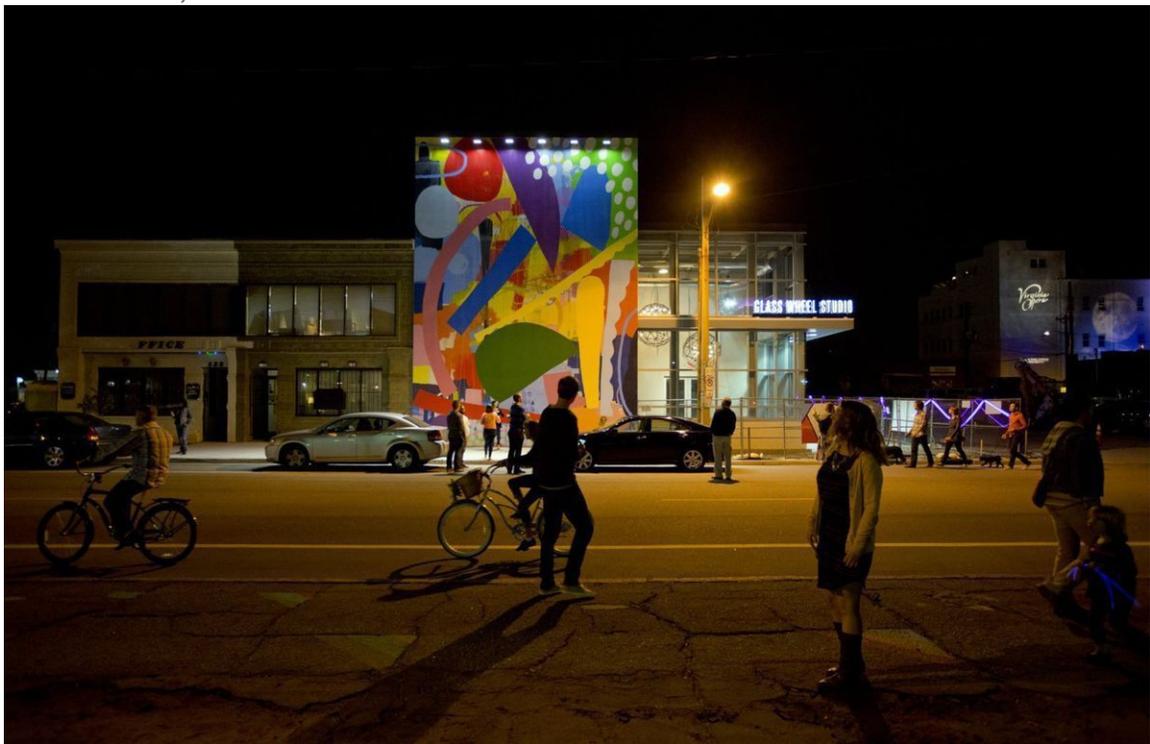


The Virginian-Pilot

PilotOnline.com

NEON Festival has big plans for expanded offerings, length and locations in Norfolk

By Dan Duke
The Virginian-Pilot
Jul 1, 2016



Thé N. Pham | The Virginian-Pilot

A mural is seen on West Olney Road in Norfolk during the kickoff of the NEON Festival in October.



The' N. Pham

Liz Boatwright of Hoopwright performs in the dark with her lighting hoops at The Plot during the NEON Festival kicks off on Granby Street in Norfolk, Va., on Thursday night, Oct. 15, 2015. The free festival gives the district, New Energy of Norfolk, a chance to showcase artists, artworks and performers. The' N. Pham | The Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK

The NEON Festival has big plans for its second year in downtown Norfolk's new arts district.

The free festival will expand from two to four days and bring in more programming at more venues.

Last September, the festival was described as a "coming out party for the new arts district," held in conjunction with the city's visual arts week. Efforts to revive the stretch of Granby Street north of Brambleton Avenue took a turn in April 2013,

with a Better Block event. A Dallas-based planning firm by that name organized a block party aimed at spurring development on the dilapidated and mostly vacant stretch. Businesses started moving in, many of the buildings have been renovated and a murals have been painted throughout the district.

The festival included exhibitions by local and national artists, music, theater and the unveiling of the Cementiscope, a giant kaleidoscope.

“The NEON community’s collaborative spirit inspired new partners, new art and new events for this year’s festival,” co-chair Rachel McCall said. “The level of support from our arts and community partners is inspiring, and we have robust offerings for this year’s event.”

The 2016 festival will begin with the Chrysler Museum’s Third Thursday event on Sept. 15 at the museum starting at 5 p.m. and at the Glass Studio at 8 p.m.

The planning so far includes:

Glass Wheel Studio exhibition reception, Friday, Sept. 16, 7 to 10 p.m. with two nationally known artists, Gabriel Greenlaw and Emily MacDonald-Korth.

The Plot, Friday, Sept. 16, 7 to 9 p.m. beer garden, food trucks, live music and performances. Family fun day at the Plot will be noon to 5 p.m. Sunday, with children’s activities and family friendly performances.

D’Art Center fundraiser, Saturday, Sept. 17, 5 to 9 p.m. at

The Plot, featuring art activities, art by d'Art Center artists, live music, food and drink, including Smartmouth beer.

ETC, produced by Festevents, will be new to the NEON Festival. On Saturday, Sept. 17, Town Point Park will host innovative artists, comedians, authors, musicians, food trucks and a pop-up retail marketplace.

Work I Release, will host live entertainment Thursday through Sunday and the latest Rutter Family Art Foundation exhibition. A live broadcast of Hunter at Sunrise and Tidewater Arts Outreach Acoustic Brunch on Sunday will be done on Sunday, Sept. 18.

Once again, members of the Hurrah Players, Virginia Opera, Governor's School for the Arts and Virginia Stage Company will provide entertainment.

The festival will post updates on at its website, neonnfk.com/festival.

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